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PLAYER'S HANDBOOK
RACES, CLASSES, EQUIPMENT, RULES

CAN YOU CURE
THE CANNIBAL PLAGUE?
PAGE 78

DARK SUN

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

ISSUE 319 · MAY 2004

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32 Character classes tempered by a world burning to ash.

38 In a world of limited resources, bone and stone might be your best defense.

FIGHT LIKE DRIZZT

Actually, if you buy Drizzt's swords, please don't employ them in any manner other than to impress your friends and hang them above the mantle. Museum Replicas Limited is producing replicas of the dark elf's famous swords, Twinkle and Icingdeath. Each costs a little more than $250. You can learn more at **www.museumreplicas.com.**

We're as much fans of Drizzt as the next bunch, but we're not rich Drizzt fans. If you are, email us a photo of yourself with the swords in your best Drizzt costume, and we'll put it in the magazine. If you can get a few other folks to participate, don't worry about the swords, and get a photo of yourself and friends as any of these characters from R. A. Salvatore's stories: Artemis Entreri, Bruenor, Catti-brie, Drizzt, Jarlaxle, Regis, and Wulfgar. Email the photos with your name and who you're dressed as to **scalemail@paizo.com.**

TROY

The face that launched a thousand ships hits theatres this month. That's right, Brad Pitt is in another movie. We haven't seen it yet, but from what we hear, he plays a mean mutha (shut yo mouth!). D&D players might want to check out *Troy* for the Carthage–er carnage–alone.

THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN

For many D&D players, the initials "H. P." are associated with a particular author and a body of fiction about the arcane and occult. "The Prisoner of Azkaban" even sounds like the title of a Lovecraft story. Alas, there's no good Cthulhu movies on the horizon (note that that we said "good movies"), so we'll have to settle for Harry Potter. From the trailers, it looks like it might be a fair trade, but judge for yourself. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* releases next month.

ART FOR DRAGON'S SAKE

We're looking for new talent to produce fantasy artwork. You must be able to work digitally or provide a final RGB 300 dpi digital image. Ability to be flexible and meet tight deadlines is an absolute must.

To submit your work, place four of your best pieces onto one 8.5 in. x 11 in. image area that includes your name, phone number, and email address. The jpeg image should be no higher than 72 dpi. Email your submission to: **dmart@paizo.com.**

WYRM'S **TURN**

FROM THE EDITOR
THE BETTER PART OF VALOR

The word "paizo" means "I play" in Greek, and nowhere is our company motto better exemplified than the new campaign started up by Mike McArtor, one of *Dragon's* two assistant editors. The players include Wes (the other assistant editor), Jeremy (from customer service), Rob (the advertising director), James (*Dungeon's* associate editor), Patrick (*Dragon's* graphic designer), Lisa (Paizo's CEO), and myself. We gather to play in the cardboard-box-clogged meeting room on Tuesday nights after work, dice in hand and character sheets drawn from desk drawers.

Once again, a DM opened the lovely Pandora's box of allowing players to choose monstrous races for their characters, and so our adventuring group is a motley crew that consists of an air elemental, ogre mage, winged awakened deinonychus, doppelganger, gold dragon, half-orc samurai, and what we fondly refer to as "the dwarfalope," Patrick's tauric dwarf-griffon. And I thought the party in my other game was weird. . . . It all works out though, because in this campaign, humans are more-or-less innately evil and in league with demon lords, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

For the following description of the first two sessions, please keep in mind that although we are playing monstrous characters, they're all 1st-level PCs, most using the monster class advancement rules featured in *Savage Species.*

Session 1: The first session was the pits–literally. We spent several happy hours of game play navigating a tunnel with an unstable floor. You might think that crossing a few pits isn't much of a challenge, but we are 1st level. Mighty adventurers are we.

Session 2: In the second session, we fought a vampire and encountered a demon lord.

Let that sink in.

I thought it was great. That's how I run my campaigns. If the low-level adventurers walk past the sign that says, "Here there be dragons," and laugh it off, they get what's coming to them. Perhaps that's why my characters tend to be more cautious than most (some would say paranoid).

When we were met outside the pit-strewn tunnel by a mysterious stranger who wanted us to go back in and stop a demon lord from being freed, I tried to convince everyone that the man was trying to trick us into releasing the demon and would betray us once we had done so. I only partially succeeded, and we decided to follow the human. Well, guess what happened next.

I think we should have learned some important lessons.

First: Never trust the mysterious stranger.

Second: Run away!

Sure, the desperate gamble that pays off or ends in heroic tragedy is one of the best parts of the game. No guts, no glory. That's why they call them heroes, right? Yet, let's not forget the better part of valor.

So two sessions later, we met yet another mysterious stranger. This time it was a dragon, not a vampire. The dragon told us of a haunted castle that it feared to enter. Think about it: *The dragon was afraid of going into the haunted castle.* I bet you can guess what my character had to say about that. Now what do you think we decided to do?

We're never going to get this valor thing right.

Matthew Sernett
Editor-in-Chief

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READERS TALK BACK
LOOKING AHEAD

ZOGONIA
WHY AREN'T YOU ANGRY ABOUT US NOT GETTING ANY TREASURE LAST ADVENTURE ?
YOU WIN A FEW... YOU LOSE A FEW...
WHAT KIND OF ANSWER IS THAT? DWARVES ARE SUPPOSED TO BE GREEDY! GREEDY!! YOU'RE A DWARF -- WHERE IS YOUR BIOLOGICALLY INBRED SENSE OF GREEDINESS?!!
BAM
YOU KNOW WHAT? YOU SUCK AS A DWARF! NOW I KNOW WHY YOU DON'T HANG WITH OTHER DWARVES!! - YOU'RE A DISAPPOINTMENT TO YOUR RACE!... PROBABLY.
TONY MOSELEY ©2004
SAY... CAN YOU LOAN ME A FEW SILVERS SO I CAN GET SOME ALE?
50% INTEREST... ACCUMULATED HOURLY.

BY TONY MOSELEY

A NOVEL APPROACH

I love your magazine, and I think you guys do a heck of a job in bringing fresh new ideas and fun aspects to D&D, whether you're playing GREYHAWK, FORGOTTEN REALMS, or just a generic D&D world.

I have two things I'd like to address.

First, you once said in "Scale Mail" that if anyone had any suggestions for fantasy worlds that could be showcased in *DRAGON* to write in and let you know. I have the perfect one! Have you ever read Terry Goodkind's series? It starts with *Wizard's First Rule,* and then there are a bunch of books that come afterward. A number of very cool classes could be taken from that world, not to mention a map that could be published and various feats that could be created from the book. I would love to see Terry Goodkind's books broken down into D&D terms, in particular the Mord-Sith and the Confessors. There are others, but those would be the biggies as far as I'm concerned. Please consider this!

Second, you know that Eggo commercial where the CEO is asking why they didn't think of making syrup sooner? "It's not rocket-surgery!" he says. Well, I was thinking, you guys should take some of the best-selling FORGOTTEN REALMS books and give character stats, feats, and classes based off them. I mean, you have all those wonderful stories that are being put out, and some of us want to know how the authors made the characters! As an example, one of Elaine Cunningham's books, called *Magehound,* has a group of people who are magic resistant and who study fighting styles in order to be councilors to wizards. I can't remember the name of the organization, but it's a very cool concept! It would be cool to have a breakdown of that class in your magazine. For example, what are the stats of the wild-elf sorcerer who is the baddie of that story? What're the stats on the necromancer that goes to the Elemental Plane of Water? What're the stats of Tzigone (who seems to be a sorcerer/rogue but much more)? There is tons of stuff for your magazine, and that's only one book! Doing the stats for the book can generate not only interest in the book, but interest in the magazine if someone's read the book and liked it. You could take one long series, two short ones, or three single books, and do a spread on them as a new feature of your magazine. I don't think I'm alone in wanting to see these things and I hope you all consider doing it!

Jennifer Andersen
Portland, Oregon

Do you have a crystal ball?

In the not-too-distant future, a new regular feature will provide the kinds of things you suggest for both Wizards of the Coast novels and other fantasy books. In a couple pages, it will give a sneak peak at the featured novel, talk briefly about what D&D players will enjoy, and transform some element of the novel into D&D rules. You can expect to see more than NPCs though: We plan for the column to feature all kinds of D&D content, from spells and feats to magic items and PC races.

WE HEAR AND OBEY

DRAGON has changed quite a bit since the 1980s, so I'd like to make an observation.

The magazine seems to use too much space introducing prestige classes, variant races, and so on that offer little value for the space they occupy. There are only so many races and prestige classes that any campaign can use. If *DRAGON* is to support D&D, then should it not develop in more detail the information provided in the core books? As an example, fleshing out the yuan-ti species in an article allows DM and player alike to have a more layered and textured playing experience by adding some context for the creatures. Understanding aspects of yuan-ti society, breeding, religion, and so on, is a key way to build on the knowledge base contained in the core rulebooks (where

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30TH ANNIVERSARY OF D&D
28TH ANNIVERSARY OF DRAGON

DRAGON HEROES

D&D Retrospective
by Mat Smith
Look back on 30 years of the best game in history, and get a glimpse of what's to come. Of course, there's more to it than humdrum history: Ever seen the D&D beach towel? You will.

Dragon PCs
by Mike McArtor
Play a dragon from 1st to 20th level—no really! Play a gold, silver, brass, bronze, or copper dragon alongside other 1st-level PCs, no level adjustment required.

Fostered Dragons
by Casey Loe
Babysitting can be rough, but what happens when the neighbor's kid is a dragon? Find out what makes dragons give up their young, how you can survive the rigors of raising a hatchling, and why it's worth all the trouble.

Dragon Kingdoms
by Mike Mearls
In a D&D world, who would really wear the crown? See how every color of dragon—chromatic and metallic—imposes its authority on others.

Countdown to Eberron
by Mat Smith
At long last, the Dragonmarks are revealed. Learn about their history, check out a Dragonmark prestige class, and use Dragonmark feats in your game.

Plus, "DM's Toolbox," "The Play's the Thing," "Dungeoncraft," "Under Command," "Silicon Sorcery," "Sage Advice," and more!

space limitations did not allow for this kind of detailed treatment). Creating the umpteenth new prestige class is not adding layers of "realism" or description to the existing D&D landscape, but rather is littering it.

Likewise, the articles buried in the back of the magazine, like "DM's Toolbox" and "Sage Advice," are treasure troves of information for the D&D gaming experience. Why are these articles not front-and-center, accompanied by great artwork and graphics to illustrate their pages? "Sage Advice" would be the most read article in the magazine (if it's not already), if it was expanded to illustrate what was being discussed. Instead, it's treated like a second-class citizen in a magazine that really should strive to develop this type of article.

Let's face it, not all of us have the time (or skills) to develop the ecology of the mummy on our own, so it seems to me that *Dragon* should be a tool that builds more of this kind of support. As an example of the problem, I noticed a letter written in *Dragon*, issue #316, in which the author asked about having more information on the duergar presented in the magazine. The response by the editor was that there was nothing published because they had never received anything! Why is *Dragon* waiting for submissions on the duergar while publishing several articles on prestige classes that will likely never get used by the majority of gamers? One of the virtues of the earlier days of *Dragon* (and I hope that I am not romanticizing here) was the wealth of articles that embellished or expanded on aspects of the core rules themselves (ecologies, variant rules, and so on).

What about an article on the simple potion? It could offer many interesting aspects to the boring old potions found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, including wild appearances of bottles, interesting histories for particularly storied potions, and special nuances for all of your favorites from regular game play. For example, it could contain a start to finish description of the experience of drinking a healing potion. I'm just throwing this out off the top of my head to show how it might be more interesting to develop the existing material rather than spitting out a whole new slew of material that no one will ever get to and that only adds to a growing mountain of under-utilized material on the same subject.

Developing a campaign is all about the details. Which details *Dragon* decides to expand upon might, in the end, determine its utility for gamers like me.

Scott Jack
London, Ontario

Dragon does feature the kinds of things you mention. "Shrouded in Death: The Ecology of the Mummy" appeared in issue #300. "Venom and Coil: The Secret Life of Yuan-ti" appeared in issue #305. Other examples of such articles include "Malignant Growth: The Ecology of the Troll" in issue #301, "Paragons of War: The Ecology of the Hobgoblin" from issue #309, and the various "Secret Life" articles about gnomes, elves, dwarves, and drow. As for variant rules, you can find them in a number of issues: vehicle rules (issue #294), parrying rules (issue #301), new mounted combat rules (issue #304), action stunts (issue #306), variant fighters (issue #310), level progressions for lycanthropes (issue #313), defiling magic (issue #315), truenames (issue #317), and so on.

Yet even with such articles in mind, you make a good point. Dragon can do a better job of serving players with different tastes, and it can give greater emphasis to the experiences and elements of play central to all D&D games. Although Dragon does feature the kind of articles you like, the pendulum of gaming content swings from issue to issue. Not every issue has an "Ecology" article or one that gives detailed descriptions of magic items. On the other end of the spectrum, new PC races appear in Dragon infrequently.

The key is consistency. The magazine should reliably present a good mix of content for expert and novice players, for people who play only with the core rules and those who love the crazy new ideas. We've heard readers' comments to this effect, and we're paying attention to that feedback. Keep your eyes on the pages of Dragon for more info as we approach a "not-too-distant future."

FACT OR FICTION

I have to admit that when I saw the premise for the exotic-heroes-themed issue, I was less than enthused. Players and DMs must have choices to keep their campaigns interesting, but with all the Wizards of the Coast and non-Wizards products out there, plus the glut

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AVAILABLE NOW!

Dungeon provides the very best in official Dungeons & Dragons adventures every single month! Don't miss this issue, a Dark Sun super-event sure to make history!

DM's Guide to Dark Sun

by David Noonan

Polyhedron provides a massive Mini Game-sized guidebook to the treacherous world of Dark Sun, where barbaric races battle against ruthless enemies under the burning red rays of a dying sun. Our in-depth guide to the setting presents the creatures and history of the world, complementing the "Dark Sun Player's Handbook" in this issue of *Dragon!*

Last Stand At Outpost Three

by David Noonan

The PCs find themselves besieged by marauding elves in a wilderness trading outpost. Can they organize a defense of Outpost Three against the elves and their sinister allies—and figure out why the elves attack night after night? A Dark Sun D&D adventure for 3rd-level characters.

Buzz on the Bridge

by John Simcoe

The isolated halfling village of Lindley has a problem. The main supply route into town, a large covered bridge spanning a mountain chasm, has been infested by a hive of giant bees. The sheriff has already perished in an attempt to remove the vermin, so when the PCs arrive in town, mayor Dunleary Appletop pleads for their help. A D&D adventure for 3rd-level characters, featuring a miniatures-scale map.

of information on the web we can access, it can be a case of too much of a good thing.

The issue arrived in the mail, and I flipped through it (reading the comics first, as always). I gave the articles a once-over: *Nothing to write home about,* I thought.

Then I gave the articles another look. Wow. *Wow!* Good stuff!

The article that stands out most in my mind is "Xenophilia." The new PC races add a lot of interesting options to campaigns, and while I don't plan on using the races for PCs at present, I *do* plan on using them as NPC races very soon.

I'm now going to give each article more careful attention and mine the issue for all the ideas it's worth.

While I don't plan on buying and using the Eberron setting (Forgotten Realms is enough for me, thanks), there's no reason I can't take the shifter race and other tidbits of information and plunk them into campaigns I run.

My only complaint about *Dragon* in general would be the way fiction is handled. I would like to see fiction in every other issue or every third issue (which has been the course of things for the past year, it seems). Please, though, don't let one author dominate the pages with multi-part sagas like the Thomas Harlan story (novella?) that has been going on for four or five issues so far. Let's see some short fiction from new authors and from established pros, too.

Mike Griffith
Address withheld

Thanks for the compliments, Mike. We're glad the issue exceeded your expectations.

While you're unlikely to see fiction from authors with nothing else under their belts, readers can expect to see a greater variety of established writers in the magazine. The frequency of fiction in the magazine will vary somewhat, but multi-part stories will be the exception, not the rule.

WHO PUT THE "0" IN THAC0?

First, let me compliment the folks at *Dragon* for consistently improving and updating our game. My gaming buddies and I are eternally grateful not only for the continued good work you do, but also for the years of material that have come before. Keep it up.

DRAGONMIRTH RETURNS

Be discovered in the premier magazine for gamers, by gamers, and of gamers. *Dragon* is looking for one- to four-panel comics of exceptional quality and humorousness. This is your opportunity to put "published" on your résumé. Your accepted comic will appear in a future issue of *Dragon* for the world to see. Consistent quality will result in a contract for a number of paid comics.

To submit your comic, send a 300 dpi, hi-res jpeg to **dragonmirth@paizo.com.** The image you send must be actual size. Include your name, phone number, and email address.

Earlier, while spelunking through a box of first- and second-edition tomes, searching for adventure hooks, I came across an ad for the official *AD&D Trivia Game.* What a sweet idea! Is this thing for real? How come I've been a gamer for more than ten years and never heard of it? Are there any plans to make an updated edition? If not, where can I get my hands on one? Admittedly, the catalog is more than ten years old, but there has to be a copy around somewhere.

Stephen Muick
Gainesville, FL

We've heard of it. We have a copy in the office library, and a few folks at Paizo have copies at home. There aren't any plans to update it, but future issues of Dragon *will contain similar puzzles and brainteasers. Also, check out issue #320 to see a picture of the* AD&D Trivia Game *and photos of other awesome obscure D&D products. To celebrate D&D's 30th anniversary, issue #320 features a retrospective on D&D and all the weird and wonderful things that were made for it.*

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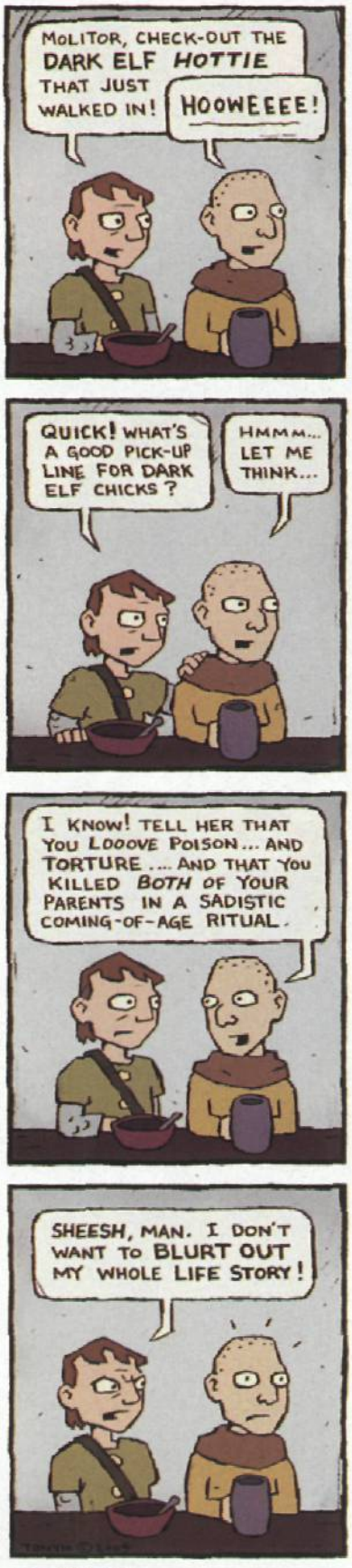
MOLITOR, CHECK-OUT THE DARK ELF HOTTIE THAT JUST WALKED IN!
HOOWEEEE!
QUICK! WHAT'S A GOOD PICK-UP LINE FOR DARK ELF CHICKS?
HMMM... LET ME THINK...
I KNOW! TELL HER THAT YOU LOOOVE POISON... AND TORTURE.... AND THAT YOU KILLED BOTH OF YOUR PARENTS IN A SADISTIC COMING-OF-AGE RITUAL.
SHEESH, MAN. I DON'T WANT TO BLURT OUT MY WHOLE LIFE STORY!

BY TONY MOSELEY

DUAL TO THE DEATH

THE FIRST DUAL-CLASSED CHARACTER

by Gary Gygax

There is a most malign mage whose actual name is still unknown to mankind. He is known only as Erac's Cousin, and folk make signs to ward off evil when they hear it spoken. Bitter is Erac's Cousin, hard and merciless in his actions. Yet he is not without redeeming qualities, and his bravery is unquestioned. You see, he was the first character in the GREYHAWK campaign to actually gain dual-class status, and he was played by my eldest son, Ernie, one of the handful of stalwart expert players in my GREYHAWK campaign.

In his adventuring, Erac's Cousin was able and effective. This led to his rapid rise in ability as a spellcaster. Naturally then, when looting after a successful encounter, he opened with eager fingers a scroll tube found in the treasure trove of the vanquished. He read it. Ah, the consternation of this darkly aligned character when the runes upon the parchment sheet therein swirled and burned bright, their mighty enchantment whisking him from the place of his triumph to somewhere far, far distant!

The cursed scroll was of the utmost power, and Erac's Cousin found that in the blink of an eye he was no longer on Oerth. He had been transported to a small, red-hued planet, to a locale there called The Land of Ugor, a place inhabited by man-eaters! Although the lesser gravity of "Barsoon" enabled him to perform physical feats quite impossible on Oerth, Erac's Cousin did not long enjoy his newfound prowess. A horde of hungry cannibals rushed forth and surrounded him.

Being quite unable to employ any of his magical abilities on this strange new world, Erac's Cousin sought safety in a tree. He scrambled up to a lofty place with ease, but the ones seeking to dine on his flesh were undeterred. Up clambered several of the vile cannibals. Fortunately for our antihero, the attackers had to come after him one at a time. Using his dagger and new-found strength, Erac's Cousin fought, sustained a slight wound or two, and slew cannibal after determined cannibal. Eventually, gaining a sword in the process, the novice fighter managed to be in a position to strike first against each new assailant. After some hours, the ground around the base of his tree sanctuary was ringed with dead cannibals.

Discouraged by their losses, the attackers gave up, took a few of their own dead to dine upon, and left their intended prey alone on his high limb. Making sure that they were gone, Erac's Cousin descended, equipped himself with some armor garnered from fallen foes, and set off at a bounding run that soon took him beyond any possible attack from the cannibals. As I tallied the number of attackers he had slain, his gains in armor, weapons, and local coinage, it was clear that this character had accumulated sufficient experience to be rated a 2nd-level fighter. As he was not a magic-user on the new planet, Erac's Cousin was clearly now a fighter.

Because Erac's Cousin had taken to the sword perforce, I could not as a fair DM decree that he had abandoned his magical profession. What had been done was to empower the character with the capacity to operate as either a magic-user or as a fighter. That suited Ernie just fine, and thereafter, when Erac's Cousin ventured forth he would announce which of the two classes he operated in, and have Erac's Cousin with the accouterments for that class only.

The upshot is that the first dual-classed character was actually not one as later defined in the rules. He was a special sort of multi-classed PC. No other character in my campaign ever attained that status, because the special circumstances of Erac's Cousin's situation were never duplicated. To my way of thinking such a special dual-class condition was and remains fair, for the two professions were "Erned" . . . if you'll pardon the pun.

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PLAYER'S HANDBOOK

by David Noonan · illustrated by Eric Polack, Todd Harris, and Jason Engle

DARK·SUN

DARK SUN
SETTING & RACES
Struggling to Survive in a Savage World

by David Noonan · illustrated by Todd Harris and Jason Engle

The world of DARK SUN is a harsh wasteland created by evil magic that sucked the life from the planet. Once, it was a lush, green world of vast oceans and teeming jungles, but mighty dragon-kings, mad for power, developed magic that sapped life energy. As they used this defiling magic against each other, they turned oceans into deserts and forests into ash.

Today, the dragon-kings have become petty godlings, ruling over the lands they ruined. Each controls a massive city-state and is the object of worship by the corrupt theocracy that does the day-to-day ruling. Every city-state has a large army, but the dragon-kings rarely war against each other anymore. Indeed, the templars who worship the dragon-kings rarely even see them.

Life is hard on Athas, the world of DARK SUN. Slaves toil endlessly in temperatures that often exceed 110 degrees. Merchants and nobles are subject to the cruel whims of the templars and the intrigues of their fellows. DARK SUN is a place of scarcity, and many hands grasp at the few remaining gifts the world has to offer.

Do you have the strength and will to take what you need to survive and conquer in the desert wastes?

HOW TO EXPLORE THE WORLD

This update of DARK SUN is broken up into a number of articles. Everything you need as a player can be found in this magazine, at the page numbers indicated below.

Introduction and Races: Page 18.
Classes: Page 32.
Equipment and Rules: Page 38.

DUNGEON #110 contains the DM's Guide to DARK SUN, designed to help a DM get a DARK SUN game up and running. *DUNGEON* #110 also features "Last Stand at Outpost Three," an adventure for beginning DARK SUN characters. The PCs find themselves besieged by marauding elves in a wilderness trading outpost.

"Last Stand at Outpost Three": Page 32.
DM's Guide to DARK SUN: Page 58.
DARK SUN Monster Supplement: Page 82.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

DARK SUN has a rich history established with a boxed campaign set published in 1991, an update of the setting in 1995, and a line of adventures and accessories that stretched until late 1996. Yet the revision of the D&D rules in 2000 meant that many aspects of the DARK SUN campaign became problematic.

The setting is as evocative as ever, but many of the specific mechanical elements (such as half-giants who always got d12s for Hit Dice and defiler wizards as a separate class from preservers) don't work with the new D&D rules. In this DARK SUN update, the current D&D rules take precedence over specific rules from old DARK SUN products—as long as the flavor of the world is maintained. There's no separate gladiator class, for example, because a fighter with the right feat choices does everything a gladiator needs to do.

This update of the setting also avails itself of the new rules elements in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*. Psionics has always been an important part of DARK SUN, and Athas is a great place for a psion, psychic warrior, wilder, or soulknife to adventure. This article also introduces two of the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*'s new races, the elan and the maenad, to the world of DARK SUN.

Some players who fell in love with the DARK SUN setting in the 1990s have already updated their campaigns to take advantage of the new D&D rules. If you're one of those players, keep doing what you're doing, but you might get some good ideas from what you're about to read.

This update also sets the timeline of the game forward 300 years and restores the political situation to something like it was when the first DARK SUN product was published. Like many campaign settings of the time, DARK SUN had a strong metaplot, and the situation in the city-states of Athas changed dramatically from sourcebook to sourcebook. This update provides a stable starting point, but what happens to the

world of Athas from this point forward is up to you.

RACES OF ATHAS

There are twelve PC races to choose from in the Dark Sun campaign. Dark Sun PC races—even those from the *Player's Handbook* and *Expanded Psionics Handbook*—are often more powerful than their standard versions, and all have a level adjustment of +1 or +2. The harsh world of Dark Sun produces tough people, and characters in the campaign begin play able to face greater threats. For fans of the old Dark Sun setting, this emulates the tougher races it presented and the rule that players must begin play with 4th-level characters.

Aarakocras

The winged birdmen known as aarakocras are a rare sight in the settled parts of Athas. Only aarakocra travelers, traders, diplomats, and exiles spend much time among the city-states.

Personality: A typical aarakocra is known for his need for freedom, both in the literal and figurative sense. Most aarakocras are quite claustrophobic and intensely uncomfortable when restrained in any way; they also dislike long-term obligations to others, and many become depressed or suicidal when pressed into military service or slavery.

Physical Description: An aarakocra's arms form the leading edge of his wings, which also attach to his torso at the hips. About midway along each wing is a clawed hand with fine motor ability rivaling that of a human. When flying, aarakocras can manipulate items in their foot-talons as well as they could if they were holding them in their hands.

An aarakocra's plumage varies from white to bluish-gray.

Relations: Aarakocras tend to get along well with most other races. Because they come from isolated communities far north of the city-states, they are sometimes surprised by the quirks of other races.

Alignment: Aarakocra society is loosely knit and seminomadic, so aarakocras have a tendency to be chaotic.

Aarakocra Lands: The vast majority of aarakocras come from a region hundreds of miles north of the Tablelands called Winter Nest. Some few are born in aarakocra trading outposts or diplomatic enclaves in the city-states.

Religion: Some aarakocras rely on clerics of Air for religious guidance, while others heed the teachings of the few druids in their midst. Those aarakocras confronted with the theocracies of the city-states pay only lip service to the notion of worshiping the dragon-kings.

Language: Aarakocras speak their own language, Aarakocra. Most aarakocra in Winter Nest and elsewhere have enough contact with merchants from the city-states that they speak Common as well. An aarakocra's beak has an easier time with the clicking sounds of the Thri-Kreen language than humanoid mouths.

Names: Aarakocras tend to have a single multisyllabic name with lots of vowels and soft consonants in them.

Adventurers: A burning desire to explore and a natural inquisitiveness serve aarakocra adventurers well, although few aarakocras stray from Winter Nest. Those who leave find the city-states fascinating, if puzzling and sometimes dangerous.

Aarakocra Racial Traits

- +4 Dexterity, -2 Strength. Lightweight but fast, aarakocras are built for speed over strength.
- Medium: As Medium creatures, aarakocras have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- Monstrous Humanoid: Because they aren't humanoids, aarakocras are immune to spells such as *charm person* and *hold person*.
- Aarakocras have a base land speed of 20 feet. Their fly speed is 90 feet, with average maneuverability.
- +1 natural armor.
- Natural attacks: A flying aarakocra can attack with two talons, dealing 1d4 points of damage each, or he can use a weapon in his talons. An aarakocra on the ground can wield weapons in his wing-claws at his base attack bonus and

PLACES IN DARK SUN

The following terms appear in various places throughout this article. The short definitions here are further expanded upon in *Dungeon* #110.

- **Athas:** The world of the Dark Sun campaign setting. It is a desert planet where magic is relatively rare and psionics are as common as heat and sand.
- **City-States:** Seven independent cities, each a small nation unto itself. Six are ruled by dragon-kings and the seventh, Tyr, is called a free city. The cities are Balic, Draj, Gulg, Nibenay, Raam, Tyr, and Urik.
- **Crimson Savannah:** Beyond the Jagged Cliffs is the home of the Kreen Empire, a vast swath of land with reddish soil.
- **Cromlin:** This is a village of silt-skimming sailors on the shores of the Sea of Silt. It is an unruly place, home to those unfit for city life.
- **Forest Ridge:** Likely the largest forest on Athas, Forest Ridge lies just west of the Ringing Mountains and is home to the halfling town of Ogo.
- **Hinterlands:** The uncharted and mostly unknown areas beyond the Ringing Mountains and Forest Ridge. Few who attempt to travel there make it, and fewer still return.
- **Jagged Cliffs:** An area north of the Tablelands and west of the Forest Ridge, this area is infested with halflings.
- **Ledopolus:** The independent towns of North and South Ledopolus form the ancestral home of dwarves. Its leaders are careful not to anger the nearby dragon-kings.
- **Ringing Mountains:** Massive, nearly impassable mountains that form most of the border separating the Tablelands region from the uncivilized Hinterlands.
- **Sea of Silt:** A vast ocean of silt and sand, the Sea stretches from the Tablelands and defines its eastern border. The people of Balic make their living sailing its shallower areas.
- **Tablelands:** What little civilization there is on Athas is concentrated in the 1,000,000 square-mile area called the Tablelands.
- **Tyr Region:** The area around the city-state of Tyr.

DARK SUN WITHOUT PSIONICS

If you want to run a Dark Sun campaign without psionics, you can do so simply by ignoring the references to psionics in the rules presented here. In that case, also remove the elans and maenads from the world, but retain the level adjustments for the races you play with.

attack with his bite as a secondary attack, dealing 1d3 points of damage.

• Weapon Proficiency: Aarakocras are proficient with the javelin. Aarakocras learn to use these throwing weapons at an early age.

• +2 racial bonus on Craft (any one), Knowledge (nature), Listen, and Spot checks. Aarakocras spend a great deal of their time hunting, building nests, and making tools.

• Claustrophobic: Aarakocras suffer a -4 penalty on all attack rolls and skill checks when in an enclosed area.

• Inborn Power: Aarakocras gain 3 extra power points at 1st level, regardless of whether they choose a psionic class or not. They can use the power points provided to manifest *elfsight*. If you take levels in a class that offers a repertoire of psionic powers, simply add the 3 power points to your power point total, and add your inborn power to your list of powers known. Aarakocras use their inborn power at a manifester level equal to their character levels. They use Charisma to set the save DC unless they have levels in a psionic class such as psion or psychic warrior that uses a different ability score to set the DC. In that case, they choose either Charisma or the psionic class's relevant ability score to set the save DC.

ECL AND LA

A creature's effective character level (ECL) is the sum of its Hit Dice, level adjustment, and class levels. Use character level for all game functions except awarding experience, determining starting equipment, and determining how much experience the character needs to gain a new level. For all three of those functions, use effective character level instead.

Level adjustment (LA) is a measure of how much more powerful a creature is than other creatures of its Hit Dice. A level adjustment provides a numeric comparison with the seven standard races from the *Player's Handbook*, showing how much "more powerful" that creature is than one of the standard races, in terms of levels.

For more information on ECL and LA, see the *Monster Manual* glossary.

• Automatic Languages: Aarakocra and Common. Bonus Languages: Auran, Halfling, and Thri-Kreen.

• Favored Classes: Ranger.

• Level Adjustment: +2.

Dwarves

On Athas, dwarves aren't subterranean miners. They are a long-lived but slowly dying race known for their relentless focus on a single task to the exclusion of all others.

Personality: How a dwarf behaves depends greatly on his focus, a single task that dominates every aspect of his life until it's completed. Each dwarf has a focus that guides his actions during every waking moment. A focus is usually a specific goal, such as "dig a new irrigation ditch," "convince the merchants of House Stel to improve our trade terms," or "slay the gaj that's been terrorizing our outpost."

If you're roleplaying a dwarf, you should be able to describe your current focus in a single sentence without a moment's hesitation. You can change your focus anytime you like simply by telling the DM, although most dwarves don't change their focus until the task is completed or it's apparent that it never will be completed. Think carefully about choosing a focus that'll make your goals diverge from those of the other PCs. Your focus should make for interesting roleplaying, but it shouldn't form a wedge between you and the other players.

Physical Description: Dwarves tend to be shorter and stockier than humans, but their eye, skin and hair color falls into the same ranges as humans. Adult male dwarves all have beards, although most keep them closely trimmed.

Relations: Dwarves categorize people according to their relation to their focuses, not by race, gender, or other characteristics. If someone can aid a dwarf in the resolution of his focus, he'll be at least marginally polite and helpful. However, standing between a dwarf and his focus makes the person an enemy, and not relating to his focus at all makes the being irrelevant.

Alignment: A dwarf's respect for those who fulfill their stated objectives gives most a lawful outlook.

Dwarf Lands: Dwarves are found intermingled with the human populations of the city-states; dwarves do not have communities to call their own anymore. The towns of Ledopolus are an ancestral home of the dwarves, so the dwarven population there is larger than it would be otherwise. In most city-states, dwarves congregate in certain neighborhoods to the exclusion of others.

Religion: Most dwarves worship one of the dragon-kings, although many heed the words of elemental clerics, especially those of earth and fire.

Language: Dwarves have overwhelmingly adopted the language of the humans they live with. They only use their ancestral language of Dwarven among each other and on ceremonial occasions.

Names: Dwarves once had an elaborate naming structure that detailed a particular dwarf's heritage by describing his ancestors. The naming system was unwieldy, however, so it has fallen into disuse, and dwarves have adopted human naming conventions.

Adventurers: Dwarven adventurers are driven by a focus that puts them in harm's way, such as "map the Jagged Cliffs region," "overthrow the dragon-king," or "make enough money to buy the freedom of my family."

Dwarf Racial Traits

Athasian dwarves have all the dwarven racial traits listed in the *Player's Handbook*, except as follows:

• +4 Constitution, +2 Wisdom, -2 Charisma: Dwarves are stout and tough but tend to be gruff and reserved.

• Dwarves lose stonecunning, weapon familiarity, their +2 racial bonus on saving throws against poison, their +1 racial bonus on attack rolls against orcs, their +4 dodge bonus to Armor Class against giants, their +2 racial bonus on Appraise checks, and their +2 racial bonus on Craft checks.

• Inborn Power: Athasian dwarves gain 3 extra power points at 1st level, regardless of whether they choose a psionic class or not. They can use the power points provided to manifest

vigor. If you take levels in a class that offers a repertoire of psionic powers, simply add the 3 power points to your power point total, and add your inborn power to your list of powers known. Dwarves use their inborn power at a manifester level equal to their character levels. They use Charisma to set the save DC unless they have levels in a psionic class such as psion or psychic warrior that uses a different ability score to set the DC. In that case, they choose either Charisma or the psionic class's relevant ability score to set the save DC.

- +2 racial bonus on saving throws against psionic powers, spells, and spell-like effects: Dwarves have an innate resistance to magic spells and psionic powers.
- Focus: Dwarves are notoriously single-minded, focusing on one task to the exclusion of others. This focus is something that can be simply stated, such as "overthrow the government," "get the caravan to Urik," or "find the twelve ruby chrysalises." Dwarves gain a +4 racial bonus on Will saves against charm or compulsion effects that would change, delay, or distract from their focus.
- Dwarven Blood: Dwarves are resistant to venoms and toxins, getting a +4 racial bonus on Fortitude saving throws against poison.
- Automatic Languages: Dwarven and Common. Bonus Languages: Terran.
- Favored Class: Cleric.
- Level Adjustment: +1.

Elans

Originally created as a secret network of court agents by a powerful society of psions known as The Order, elans are not born; they are made. It is said that The Order erred when it created the first elans because it gave them too much free will. Some elan enclaves still owe allegiance to The Order, although the group was factionalized and driven underground after a failed plot a century ago. Other elans have turned their backs on The Order and are determined to forge their own destinies in the harsh lands of Athas. The average Athasian has never heard of an elan, but most noble families, merchant houses, and high-ranking templars have learned of their existence within the last few years.

Elans all have one thing in common: previous lives as humans. A special elan council screens living humans from a pool of applicants who've volunteered to make the transition into elans. Those who pass muster undergo a secret psionic process in one of several hidden elan enclaves, where organic life transitions to psionically-energized animation. Newly created elans retain the basic memories and personalities of their previous lives, but they keep none of their class skills, powers or spells (if any), or previous class abilities. Elans are a secretive lot in this regard, and they do not publicly reveal their enclaves or places of making. If one is to become elan, he is usually selected. Thus, elans do not reproduce biologically, but rather psionically, through the *transition life* power. Even then, their "children" are usually fully-grown adult humans. Non-human elans are never created, and it could be that the *transition life* power simply doesn't work for any other creatures but those who were originally human.

Personality: Elans are nearly as adaptable, flexible, and ambitious as the humans from which they are made. Because their state of existence sometimes leads other races to think the worst of them, elans practice a certain restraint, especially in regards to their origin. Otherwise, their personalities vary widely.

Physical Description: Elans typically stand just under 6 feet tall and weigh about 180 pounds, with men sometimes taller and heavier than women, but not always. Because new elans are selected, those who choose currently favor elans with pale skin, reddish hair, and a youthful quality. However, the first elans vary in looks as widely as humans. Elans dress in the styles similar to humans, including the adoption of unusual hairstyles, fanciful clothes, tattoos, body piercing, and the like. Elans have unlimited lifespans—as long as they are not destroyed, their mental arts could conceivably continually energize and rebuild their bodies for over a thousand years.

RACIAL ABILITY ADJUSTMENTS

Race	LA	Racial HD	Ability Adjustments	Favored Class
Aarakocra	+2	–	+4 Dexterity, -2 Strength	Ranger
Dwarf	+1	–	+4 Constitution, +2 Wisdom, -2 Charisma	Cleric
Elan	+1	–	+2 Wisdom	Psion
Elf	+1	–	+4 Dexterity, -2 Constitution	Rogue
Half-elf	+1	–	+2 Dexterity	Any
Half-giant	+1	–	+2 Strength, +2 Constitution, -2 Dexterity	Barbarian
Halfling	+1	–	+2 Dexterity, +2 Wisdom	Druid
Human	+1	–	+2 any score, +2 any other score	Any
Maenad	+1	–	+2 Strength, +4 Charisma	Wilder
Mul	+1	–	+2 Strength, +4 Constitution	Fighter
Pterran	+2	–	+2 Strength, +2 Constitution, -2 Wisdom	Barbarian
Thri-kreen	+2	2	+2 Strength, +4 Dexterity, +2 Wisdom, -2 Intelligence, -4 Charisma	Psychic warrior

However, The Order only recently established the first elan enclaves, so no known elans are more than twenty-five years old (not counting their time as humans).

Elans do not sleep as members of other races do. Instead, an elan meditates in a deep trance for 4 hours a day. An elan resting in this fashion gains the same benefit that a human does from 8 hours of sleep. While in trance, an elan concentrates on suffusing his body with psionic energy, healing the hurts and random lacerations of the day, and restoring animation and resiliency to his tissues.

Relations: Elans mix well with members of other races, especially humans. It is probable that their relations would undergo a shift should their true nature become widely known, so one of the essential tenets of elan existence is secrecy.

Alignment: Elans tend toward no particular alignment, not even neutrality. The best and the worst are found among them.

Elan Lands: Wherever humans are found, there, too, are elans.

Religion: Some elans revere the dragon-queen Lalali-Puy because the city of Gulg has the oldest and largest elan enclave. Newer elan enclaves are less likely to serve a dragon-king or elemental power, as they feel that any grace or continued existence they might hope for will depend on their own efforts and continual mastery of inborn psionic talent.

Language: Elans speak Common. They typically learn other languages, including obscure ones, and they are fond of sprinkling their speech with words borrowed from other tongues: Pterran curses, Elven musical expressions, Thri-Kreen military phrases, and so on.

Names: Elan names vary greatly and often are simply the same as the human name they possessed before they crossed into their new existence. This is particularly true when an elan wishes to pick up his old life where he left off. Others view their second chance at existence as an opportunity to start anew and might pick completely new names.

On the other hand, titles are important to the elan, although they are used only among themselves. Freshly transitioned elans have the title of Newmade, those who have had at least a few years of animate "life" have the title Made, and those over two decades old have the title of Eternal. Those that belong to the group that chooses new elans have the title of Culler (although any elan who knows the power *transition life* might take this title, whether part of the Culler Council or not).

Adventurers: Elan adventurers are akin to humans in their daring and ambition. Because some effects that afflict other races leave elans unscathed, they sometimes seem extraordinarily brave to those who do not know the secret of their existence.

Elan Racial Traits

Athasian elans have all the elan racial traits listed in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*, except as follows:

- +2 Wisdom. The selection process that creates elans favors those who demonstrate keen perception and insight.
- Automatic Language: Common. Bonus Languages: Any (other than secret languages, such as Druidic).
- Favored Class: Psion.
- Level Adjustment: +1.

Elves

On Athas, elves have pointed ears and dwell in the wilderness, but comparisons to traditional fantasy elves end there. The elves of DARK SUN are clannish, nomadic desert-dwellers said to be as fast—and as mercurial—as the sirocco.

Elves are tireless wanderers, scouring the desert sands for whatever sustenance and riches they can find. They travel on foot in tribal groups, engaging in thieving and raiding, then disappear in a cloud of dust. Some tribes trade on a more-or-less regular basis with the city-states, but elves are known for their willingness to fleece customers not of their tribe.

Personality: An elf would rather live a short, happy life among friends than toil for centuries like a dwarf. Many take a perverse pride in the stereotype that labels them as untrustworthy thieves and bandits. Most are possessed by an incurable wanderlust, always moving on to see what lies beyond the next ridge—or what's in the poorly guarded caravan approaching from the west.

Physical Description: Elves are tall and lean beyond what would be possible for humans, but their slim frames hide a deceptive, wiry strength. Both males and females wear their hair long. Facial hair never grows on their pale skin. They favor voluminous robes that protect them from the wind and sand.

Relations: It is said that the only thing harder than finding an elf you can trust is finding an elf who trusts you. Elves either ignore or hold in contempt those not of their tribe, especially nonelves. An elf living among other races carefully tests the friendship of would-be allies before letting his guard down.

Alignment: Elves tend strongly toward chaotic alignments. Whether elves are good or evil depends on what's standing between them and their next drink of water.

Elven Lands: Some elven tribes have taken up residence in the city-states—usually in their own ghetto—but most roam the sandy wastes, coming into the cities only to trade. Many tribes of elven bandits congregate along major trade routes where they can pick off heavily laden caravans.

Religion: Few elves serve the dragon-kings—or anyone else for that matter. Many of the larger tribes have druids that provide a measure of spiritual guidance, and clerics of fire and earth aren't unheard of either.

Language: Elven is the elves' native tongue, a vowel-heavy language with a singsong quality. Most elves speak at least a smattering of Common as well, whether to demand valuables from bandit victims or strike a better deal in a city-state's bazaar.

Names: Elves take a simple name in their own language, and among the tribe they'll append a descriptive term, such as "Vilyaa the Tall," if a particularly common name is causing confusion. Elves separated from their tribe often take the tribe's name as a de facto last name. Tribe names include Night Runners, Silt Stalkers, Silver Hands, Sky Singers, Water Hunters, and Wind Dancers. Many elven names

have doubled vowels, indicating that the vowel sound is stretched out slightly.

Adventurers: An elf's wanderings often develop into adventures whether he likes it or not. Some elves can't resist the temptation to fleece locals as they travel, while others find themselves the target of prejudiced harassment.

Elf Racial Traits

Athasian elves have all the elven racial traits listed in the *Player's Handbook*, except as follows:

- +4 Dexterity, -2 Constitution: Elves are graceful but frail. An elf's grace makes her naturally better at stealth and archery.
- Elves lose their +2 racial bonus against enchantment.
- Elf base land speed is 40 feet. At 10th level, it increases to 50 feet.
- Elf-Running: Athasian elves gain Endurance as a bonus feat, for they are accomplished long-distance runners.
- Inborn Power: Athasian elves gain 3 extra power points at 1st level, regardless of whether they choose a psionic class or not. They can use the power points provided to manifest their *conceal thoughts* power. If you take levels in a class that offers a repertoire of psionic powers, simply add the 3 power points to your power point total, and add your inborn power to your list of powers known. Elves use their inborn power at a manifester level equal to their character levels. They use Charisma to set the save DC unless they have levels in a psionic class such as psion or psychic warrior that uses a different ability score to set the DC. In that case, they choose either Charisma or the psionic class's relevant ability score to set the save DC.
- Weapon Proficiency: Elves receive the Martial Weapon Proficiency feats for the falchion, rapier, scimitar, longbow (including composite longbow), and shortbow (including composite shortbow) as bonus feats. Elves esteem the arts of swordplay and archery, so all elves are familiar with these weapons.
- +2 racial bonus on Listen, Search, and Spot checks. At 5th level, these racial bonuses increase to +4, and at 15th level these racial bonuses increase to +6.
- Elven Discernment: Elves are highly attuned to their environment, and they have an instinctive sense that detects when things are out of place. Elves gain a +2 bonus on saves against illusion spells and effects.
- Automatic Languages: Elven and Common. Bonus Languages: Gith and Pterran.
- Favored Class: Rogue.
- Level Adjustment: +1.

Half-Elves

The half-elves of Athas have no true home: They are regarded as outsiders in both the human-dominated city-states and the elven tribes of the wilderness. Unlike their parents, half-elves have no culture or community to call their own, but the flip side to being an outsider is being able to come and go as you please. Just to get through the day in a world that regards them as half-breed mongrels, half-elves have become adept socially, using keen perception and a diplomatic demeanor to deflect prejudice.

Personality: Most half-elves grew up as orphans or in broken homes, and most live uneasy lives in human or elven communities that don't truly accept them. Thus, a half-elf tends to be very loyal when he makes friends.

Physical Description: Half-elves look like thin humans with slightly pointed ears.

Relations: Half-elves generally get along well with most other races, especially muls and half-giants, their fellow crossbreeds. They often grow frustrated with human and elven prejudice.

Alignment: Half-elves have no affinity for a particular alignment.

Half-Elven Lands: Because they have a hard time keeping up with elven tribes in the wilderness, most half-elves live in the human city-states. They are too widely scattered to form their own communities, instead living as best they can within human society.

Religion: There are more half-elves than one might expect among the ranks of the templars, because a regimented life spent in dragon-king worship avoids

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many of the day-to-day difficulties of being a half-elf. Those half-elves who embrace their outcast nature often become elemental clerics, because fire, wind, water, and earth regard half-elves for who they are, not for who their parents were.

Language: Half-elves speak Common. Those with connections to the elven tribe of a parent learn Elven as well.

Names: Half-elves adopt the naming conventions of whatever society they live in.

Adventurers: Almost by definition, half-elves have to make their own way in the world, without a family or community to help them. Thus, the adventurer's life appeals to many.

Half-Elf Racial Traits

Athasian half-elves have all the half-elven racial traits listed in the *Player's Handbook*, except as follows:

- +2 Dexterity. Half-elves gain some of the agility of their elven parents.
- Half-elves lose their +2 bonus against enchantment effects.
- Immunity to *sleep* effects.
- Inborn Power: Athasian half-elves gain 3 extra power points at 1st level, regardless of whether they choose a psionic class or not. They can use the power points provided to manifest their *psionic charm* power. If you take levels in a class that offers a repertoire of psionic powers, simply add the 3 power points to your power point total, and add your inborn power to your list of powers known. Half-elves use their inborn powers at a manifester level equal to their character levels. They use Charisma to set the save DC unless they have levels in a psionic class such as psion or psychic warrior that uses a different ability score to set the DC. In that case, they choose either Charisma or the psionic class's relevant ability score to set the save DC.

At 5th level, half-elves gain an additional 3 psionic power points and the *detect hostile intent* power. At 10th level, half-elves gain an additional 5 psionic power points and the *danger sense* power. At 15th level, half-elves gain an additional 7 psionic power points and the *aura sight* power. As with other inborn powers, if the half-elf character has psionic classes that provide knowledge of higher-level powers, simply combine the power points and inborn powers known with those attained from the class.

- +2 racial saving throw bonus against illusion spells or effects, due to the discernment that is part of their elven heritage.
- Automatic Languages: Common. Bonus Languages: Any (other than secret languages, such as Druidic).
- Favored Class: Any.
- Level Adjustment: +1.

Half-Giants

Half-giants were force-bred into existence by the cruel dragon-kings. Intended as a force of gigantic warriors and laborers, half-giants are crosses between humans and giants. With the creation of their race came also the inception of strife, as with any people kept in bondage. Some half-giants found that a relic of their forced breeding had engendered within them a spark of secret power. So it is that some half-giants flee their circumstances and seek new lands where they are free to discover their own destinies.

Personality: For the most part, half-giants retain human sensibilities. They are curious, interested in cooperation and communication, and tend to be kind (of course, there are exceptions). Because many half-giants are refugees from their former days of bondage, where they could pass down few traditions, they are quick to pick up the local tastes, morals, customs, and habits of the area in which they settle down.

Physical Description: Half-giants typically stand from 7 to 8 feet tall and weigh from 250 to 400 pounds, with men noticeably taller and heavier than women. Most half-giants have tightly braided black hair with deep coppery complexions. Half-giants often effect grandiose dress when they can afford to do so, sporting fanciful or intimidating clothing. Half-giants have longer lifespans than humans, achieving adulthood at about age 20 and usually living a little over a century.

Relations: Most other humanoids are put off by half-giants, due to their abnormally large size. However, assuming introductions can be made without violence, many find half-giants of good alignments to be outgoing, kind creatures.

Alignment: Half-giants have a slight tendency toward good alignments, but as always, there are bad apples whose hearts have been twisted by slavery.

Half-Giant Lands: Enslaved half-giants live in the human cities, where most are the property of templars. Those who've escaped or were born free tend to live in settlements in the deepest parts of hot deserts.

Religion: Freed half-giants, as a race, have a particular disdain for religion, sometimes going out of their way to speak badly of a dragon-king. It's not that they don't believe; it's that they don't believe that a dragon-king has the best interests of its worshipers at heart. Half-giants still in bondage openly worship the dragon-king who rules them; some truly believe in their hearts while others just go through the motions.

Language: Half-giants speak Common, plus any languages their masters taught them or that they learned in the wild.

Names: Half-giants have a childhood name and a given name, usually given by friends or the community in which the half-giant grew up. Most half-giant names reflect some aspect of the desert that half-giants inhabit, although a few place names are sometimes thrown in.

Adventurers: Half-giants have wandered far to found their current desert settlements. For many, wanderlust is a way of life, and seeking after glory, fortune, or even a life of high adventure is something every half-giant can understand and accept. Most half-giants, however, are content to stay in their settlements and listen to the tales of far-away lands from those who've adventured there.

Half-Giant Racial Traits

Athasian half-giants have all the half-giant racial traits listed in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*, except as follows:

- Automatic Language: Common. Bonus Languages: Dwarven and Giant.
- Favored Class: Barbarian.
- Level Adjustment: +1.

Halflings

Feral creatures who live in the few forests remaining in the world of DARK SUN, the halflings of Athas are out of place in the city-states of the Tablelands. Yet, like how a wild creature held in a zoo can adapt to its surroundings, so too can a halfling find adventure in the cities, as well as the deserts, of DARK SUN.

Personality: Stories, song, and fine arts are of paramount importance to halflings, who have a rich oral history and collection of mythic tales. Halflings often feel sorry for creatures who have to scrabble madly for water and food, as they have little difficulty obtaining either in their forest homes. This attitude sometimes appears patronizing to others.

Physical Description: Halfling physiology is as described in the *Player's Handbook*. On Athas, many halflings decorate their skin with war-paint, tattoos, and piercings.

Relations: Halflings have a mixture of pity and curiosity about the people of the city-states, but they're socially aware enough to realize that they will always be a novelty to the larger races. After they've been among humans and other races for a while, most halflings overhear enough tales about cannibal halflings to last a lifetime. However, most don't foul their dealings with those they meet by telling them that most of those stories are true.

Alignment: Halflings have no particular alignment preference, although those who travel to the city-states have a tendency to be more chaotic than those who remain in their forest homes.

Halfling Lands: Halflings are native to the Forest Ridge, a wooded mountain range northwest of the city-states. There the halflings have many villages and even larger settlements.

Religion: Halflings let their village druids tend to their spiritual needs, although elemental clerics are not unheard of. Rare indeed is the halfling who venerates a dragon-king.

Language: Halflings speak their own language. Those who travel to the city-states pick up at least conversational Common from traveling merchants and other envoys from the Tablelands.

Names: Halfling names reflect their tribal heritage, full of aggressive consonants and references to the natural world. Common appellations include Windborne Garkala, Kaishak Treetopper, and Shethac Two-Streams.

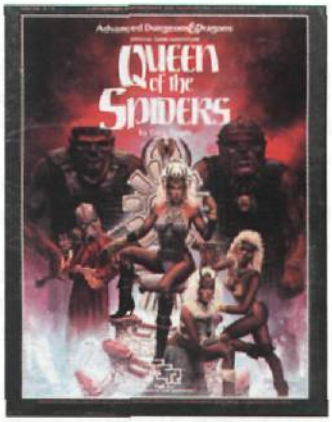
Adventurers: Halflings usually have a reason for leaving their forest homes beyond "I'm looking for adventure." Some are voluntary exiles, others are (or were) attached to diplomatic or trading missions, and some are on the run from a dark fate that awaits them back in the forest.

Halfling Racial Traits

Athasian halflings have all the halfling racial traits listed in the *Player's Handbook*, except as follows:

- +2 Dexterity, +2 Wisdom: Halflings are quick, agile, and good with ranged weapons. They also tend to be perceptive and strong-willed.
- Inborn Power: Halflings gain 3 extra power points at 1st level, regardless of whether they choose a psionic class or not. They can use the power points provided to manifest their *missive* power. If you take levels in a class that offers a repertoire of psionic powers, simply add the 3 power points to your power point total, and add your inborn power to your list of powers known. Halflings use their inborn power at a manifester level equal to their character levels. They use Charisma to set the save DC unless they have levels in a psionic class such as psion or psychic warrior that uses a different ability score to set the DC. In that case, they choose either Charisma or the psionic class's relevant ability score to set the save DC.
- +2 racial bonus on Climb, Jump, and Move Silently checks: Halflings are agile, surefooted, and athletic. At 5th level, these bonuses increase to +4. At 10th level, a halfling can make a standing long jump as if it were a running long jump and can engage in accelerated climbing without suffering the -5 penalty. At 15th level, the Climb, Jump, and Move Silently racial bonuses increase to +8.
- Automatic Languages: Halfling and Common. Bonus Languages: Aarakocran, Ancient Halfling, and Pterran.
- Favored Class: Druid.
- Level Adjustment: +1.

HOW EXPERIENCED ARE YOU?



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Humans

Humans are the dominant culture in the explored parts of Athas. Among the races, they are known for their versatility and willingness to adapt to the harsh realities of life on Athas.

Personality: Humans tend to be ambitious and individualistic; even the tyranny of the dragon-kings hasn't stamped out human diversity. Other races often don't know what to expect when meeting a human for the first time, because predicting their behavior based on cultural norms is difficult. "It's human nature," they say with a shrug whenever humans take some action for no apparent reason.

Physical Description: Humans on Athas tend to be dark-skinned with brown or black hair, although exceptions exist. Templar and noble humans tend to display the greatest variety of hair and skin coloration.

Relations: Humans tend to get along well with the races they comingle with (dwarves, muls, elans, and maenads), although their friendly attitude sometimes seems patronizing. Half-giants and thri-kreen are regarded as somewhat fearsome and dangerous. Elves, and to a lesser degree half-elves, are considered flighty and untrustworthy. Aarakocras, halflings, and pterrans are viewed as fascinating and exotic.

Alignment: Humans have no natural alignment tendencies, although the culture of each city-state pressures its inhabitants to adopt the alignment of its dragon-king.

Human Lands: Most humans live in one of the seven city-states: Balic, Draj, Gulg, Nibenay, Raam, Tyr, and Urik. Others live in the smaller outposts and communities near oases in the desert, and some few are part of hunter-gatherer tribes in the heart of the wasteland.

Religion: Most humans worship (or at least venerate) the dragon-king of the city-state where they live. Some few follow the teachings of elemental clerics or join the druids in their nature-worship.

Language: Humans speak Common, the trade tongue, which is by far the most prevalent language on Athas. Most can read and write—even slaves are taught basic literacy so they can read various signs and inscriptions.

Names: For most humans, a single name suffices. Templars often take an honorific based on their rank in the religious hierarchy. Nobles also have a family name, which is generally referred to after the word "of," as in "Agis of Asticles." Members of a merchant house take the house's name as their own last name. Freemen occasionally refer to their occupations to avoid confusion, as in "Barek the Weaver."

Adventurers: Human adventurers tend to be daring and relentless no matter why they're adventuring—whether for fame, fortune, or belief in a cause. Their versatility makes them suited to any class.

Human Racial Traits

Athasian humans have all the human racial traits listed in the *Player's Handbook*, except as follows:

- +2 any ability score, +2 any other ability score. As the most varied race, humans have no consistent racial modifiers, but every human has some innate talent.
- Inborn Powers: Humans gain 3 extra power points at 1st level, regardless of whether they choose a psionic class or not. Humans may choose any 1st-level power from the psion/wilder power list to become their inborn power, which they can manifest using their power points. Only humans have the ability to choose—the other races' choices are predetermined. If you take levels in a class that offers a repertoire of psionic powers, simply add the 3 power points to your power point total, and add your inborn power to your list of powers known. Humans use their inborn powers at a manifester level equal to their character levels. They use Charisma to set the save DC unless they have levels in a psionic class, such as psion or psychic warrior, that uses a different ability score to set the DC. In that case, they choose either Charisma or the psionic class's relevant ability score to set the save DC.

At 5th level, humans gain an additional 3 psionic power points and a 2nd-level power from the psion power list. At 10th level, humans gain an additional 5 psionic power points and a 3rd-level power from the psion power list. At 15th level, humans gain an additional 7 psionic power points and a 4th-level power from the psion power list. As with other inborn powers, if the human character has psionic classes that provide knowledge of higher-level powers, simply combine the power points and inborn powers known with those attained from the class.

- Automatic Language: Common. Bonus Languages: Any (other than secret languages, such as Druidic).
- Favored Class: Any.
- Level Adjustment: +1.

Maenads

Maenads are a race of wildly emotional creatures who are known for the rare times that their legendary restraint breaks, allowing a flood of emotional turmoil to surface, often in acts of stunning bravery or violence. Maenads have a strong martial bent, useful for venting the emotional boil they constantly keep at bay.

Maenads know not the source of the spiritual anger they all keep bottled away, but part of it is undoubtedly that, as a race, they were trapped on a featureless demiplane of crystal and dust by a higher power. Early in the year of Priest's Contemplation, the dragon-king Andropinus escaped from his banishment to The Black (described in the Athasian Cosmology section in *Dungeon* #110), bringing with him an army of maenads he discovered during his imprisonment. At first, the maenad legions conquered the city-state of Balic in Andropinus' name, but they have since spread across the Tablelands. Not all owe allegiance to Andropinus anymore, as the dragon-king seems more interested in reestablishing his control over his old subjects than considering the welfare of those he brought to Athas. Many maenads who regarded Andropinus as a savior are now disillusioned by his cruelty and saddened by the harsh land that is their new home.

Personality: Maenads seem discreet and calm, even restrained and undemonstrative, unwilling to use a sentence

where a word will do, and happier with a gesture if words can be dispensed with altogether. Their apparent calm is at odds with their more fiery reputation. However, in order to maintain a life in civilized lands and even (or especially) among themselves, maenads must practice a discipline of mental calm, lest the furies of their racial memory break forth. They are slow to make friends for this reason, but come to regard as family those that understand and accept them despite their occasional lapses.

Physical Description: Maenads are tall and have a wiry strength, standing about 5 1/2 to 6 1/2 feet tall, and typically weighing 145 to 220 pounds. Maenad men are the same height as, and only marginally heavier than, maenad women. Maenads have no facial or body hair, but usually wear the dark hair on their heads long and braided. Their skin is dusted with a peculiar sparkle, as of gem dust, giving them a striking luster in the right light. This sparkle is a natural component of their skin, which is flecked with tiny living crystals. Maenads possess grace and fine features. They prefer heavier clothes, and armor, if possible. A maenad achieves adulthood at about 25 years of age and can live to be over 150 years old.

Relations: Maenads are most comfortable with humans, finding their various temperaments similar to their own. They respect the dwarven ability to hold a grudge, but they find halflings rather silly. The other races they take as they find them, although maenads are particularly taken with elves, because the unconscious elven lightness of being is a balm to the maenad spirit. Maenads don't dislike aarakocras or thri-kreen, but they have a hard time understanding their ways.

Alignment: Maenads know that self-control is their best method of living a fulfilling life. Thus, they lean strongly toward law. Generally, they value and protect others' self control as well as their own, and so are more often good than not.

Maenad Lands: Maenads mostly live near Balic in communities of less than three hundred, where their well-hidden villages blend into the desert wastes. They hunt game and are beginning to work small farms on the fringe of Andropinus' territory.

Maenads encountered in other lands are usually refugees, warriors for hire, or adventurers.

Religion: Some maenads still serve Andropinus, while others respond to the entreaties of the druids or of elemental clerics. Water clerics are particularly welcome among the maenads, for maenad elders say their original homeland was an archipelago teeming with life and sun.

Language: Maenads speak Maenadi, a language of strict grammar. Chants play an important part in their songmaking and literature. They have their own script, which looks surprisingly similar to Elven.

Names: Maenad names are given and used much like human names. Every maenad has at least one given name, and a family name.

Adventurers: Maenads take up adventuring out of a desire to travel and see more of the world. Moreover, some maenads tend to get along easier with other races less given to inner rage than themselves. However, maenads also are adept with the sword and some psionic power, and adventuring allows them to utilize these skills.

Maenad Racial Traits

Athasian maenads have all the maenad racial traits listed in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook,* except as follows:

- +2 Strength, +4 Charisma. Maenads tend to be physically fit, and they have forceful personalities.
- Automatic Languages: Maenadi, Common. Bonus Language: Elven.
- Favored Class: Wilder.
- Level Adjustment: +1.

Muls

Sterile crossbreeds of humans and dwarves, muls have great stamina. Accordingly, the templars, noble families, and merchant houses breed them as slaves. Many of the same attributes that make them effective manual laborers serve them well in gladiator arenas.

Personality: Muls often have gruff, taciturn personalities, seen as a sort of

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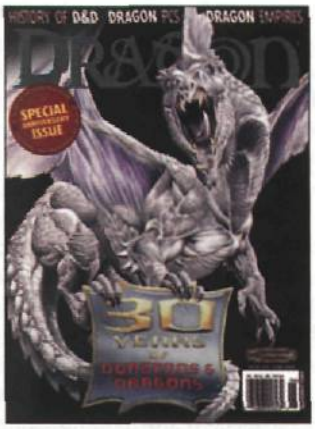

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social defense mechanism in the slave pits most call home. Many lash out in spite whenever they can avoid the consequences, having never known a friend or companion. Those muls who have escaped the toil of the typical slave (usually by excelling as a gladiator, being set free, or escaping) handle social situations better, but most remain wary of strangers and anyone who hasn't proven their trustworthiness.

Physical Description: Muls have a fast metabolism, so most of them are squat and muscular, with broad shoulders and very little body fat. Were it not for their pronounced brow ridges, slightly pointed ears, and lack of body hair, they could pass for human.

Relations: Muls are somewhat antisocial, but they don't have a particular enmity for any race. They get along slightly better with their forebears (humans and dwarves) and half-giants, who are often fellow slaves.

Alignment: The taskmaster's whip has instilled a lawful attitude in most muls, although those who have fled from slavery are usually chaotic (ex-slaves almost always have a hard time with authority figures). Mul slaves who are treated poorly—which are almost all of them—can nurture such hatred and spite in their hearts that they become evil.

Mul Lands: Muls have no culture of their own; they're entirely products of the city-states where they're bred. Some escaped slaves make a home for themselves among the desert tribes, but because no mul can start a family, they have no place to call their own.

Religion: Most muls are heavily indoctrinated into the worship of whichever dragon-king rules the city-state where they were born. Like half-giants, some enthusiastically take to the state religion, while others curse it under their breath each day.

Language: Muls are taught Common in the slave pits. If they learn other languages, it's often from captured slaves.

Names: Muls favor one simple name, generally a human one. They don't have families, so they don't take last names except in unusual circumstances. To avoid confusion, some muls will add an appellation such as "Rikus the Gladiator" or "Kalaa the Stone-Grinder."

Adventurers: Muls generally come to the adventurer's lifestyle in one of three ways. Some escape slavery and must remain one step ahead of their former masters. Others win their freedom through luck or skill—often by success in the gladiator arena. Finally, some are former soldiers under the command of the dragon-kings or in the pay of the merchant houses.

Mul Racial Traits

- +2 Strength, +4 Constitution. Muls are strong and known for their great stamina.
- Medium: As Medium creatures, muls have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- Mul base land speed is 30 feet.
- Hardy: Muls need only half as much rest to eliminate the effects of fatigue and exhaustion.
- Faster Natural Healing. Muls heal damage at twice the normal rate, recovering 2 hit points per level per day. At 10th level they gain fast healing 1, and at 15th level they gain fast healing 3.
- Inborn Power: Muls gain 3 extra power points at 1st level, regardless of whether they choose a psionic class or not. They can use the power points provided to manifest their *offensive prescience* power. If you take levels in a class that offers a repertoire of psionic powers, simply add the 3 power points to your power point total, and add your inborn power to your list of powers known. Muls use their inborn power at a manifester level equal to their character level. They use Charisma to set the save DC unless they have levels in a psionic class such as psion or psychic warrior that uses a different ability score to set the DC. In that case, they choose either Charisma or the psionic class's relevant ability score to set the save DC.
- Automatic Language: Common. Bonus Language: Dwarven.
- Favored Classes: Fighter.
- Level Adjustment: +1.

Pterrans

Reptilian creatures from the Hinterlands, pterrans are a rare sight among the city-states of Athas. A massive earthquake in the year of Desert's Fury shook pterran society out of its isolation; many young pterrans now leave their villages and explore the strange wonders of the rest of Athas.

Personality: Pterrans tend to be wary and subdued at first meeting, and most never get used to the stares of every passerby. Among other pterrans and trusted friends, though, most pterrans are open and caring. They have a subconscious politeness of demeanor, giving thanks for the smallest kindness.

Physical Description: Pterrans stand about 5 1/2 to 6 feet tall, and have light brown, scaly skin, three-fingered talon-like hands (with opposable thumbs) and three-toed feet. Vestigial leathery flaps of skin hang down under their thin arms. Their snouts are beaklike and long, and their narrow heads and long necks give them a birdlike profile.

Relations: Pterrans have been isolated long enough that they don't have any particular racial friendships or enmities, with two exceptions. The pterrans' villages have suffered from thri-kreen raider attacks of late, making the average pterran regard thri-kreen as dangerous bandits. Halfling culture and pterran culture have many parallel spiritual aspects, so pterrans get along well with halflings.

Alignment: Pterrans have an ingrained tendency to make sacrifices for the welfare of others, so most are good. They show no proclivity toward law or chaos.

Pterran Lands: Lost Scale and Pterran Vale are the two known pterran villages. All pterrans hail from there.

Religion: Pterran druids wield great spiritual influence in Lost Scale and Pterran Vale, and most pterrans celebrate the "Earth Mother" with brief prayers and ceremonies several times a day. Pterran travelers generally find worship of the dragon-kings distasteful, although they might swallow their abhorrence for the sake of politeness.

Language: Pterrans have their own tongue, but they're the only ones who use it. They've begun teaching Common to everyone in the community so they can better deal with the outside world.

Names: Pterrans use family names first, followed by a personal name that's often descriptive rather than abstract

(Ptellac Coldeye, for example, is the brother of Ptellac Greentail and Ptellac Flinttooth). Few Athasians understand the distinction, however, and call their pterran companions by their family names.

Adventurers: Pterran culture is actively sending out young members of the community to learn more about the world. Pterran PCs are likely part of this wave of travelers.

Pterran Racial Traits

- +2 Strength, +2 Constitution, -2 Wisdom. Pterrans are physically powerful, but not particularly observant or willful.
- Medium: As Medium creatures, pterrans have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- Reptilian: Pterrans have the reptilian subtype.
- Pterran base land speed is 30 feet.
- +5 natural armor bonus: The thick skin and scales of a pterran make them difficult to harm.
- Natural attacks: A pterran can attack with two talons, dealing 1d4 points of damage each, or he can use a weapon in his talons. He can also attack with his bite as a secondary attack, dealing 1d3 points of damage.
- Because of their tails, pterrans have a +4 racial bonus on Balance and Jump checks.
- Inborn Power: Pterrans gain 3 extra power points at 1st level, regardless of whether they choose a psionic class or not. They can use the power points provided to manifest their *burst* power. If you take levels in a class that offers a repertoire of psionic powers, simply add the 3 power points to your power point total, and add your inborn power to your list of powers known. Pterrans use their inborn power at a manifester level equal to their character levels. They use Charisma to set the save DC unless they have levels in a psionic class such as psion or psychic warrior that uses a different ability score to set the DC. In that case, they choose either Charisma or the psionic class's relevant ability score to set the save DC.
- Automatic Languages: Pterran and Common. Bonus Languages: Giant and Gith.
- Favored Classes: Barbarian.
- Level Adjustment: +2.

Thri-kreen

Mantislike creatures from the desert wastes, the thri-kreen are the most alien of the PC races in Dark Sun. They are pack predators with six limbs, a poison bite, and an obsession with hunting.

Personality: Thri-kreen have a pack mentality, and they're always concerned with their position in the "clutch." This makes them good team players, but a thri-kreen in charge expects his orders to be followed without question. Thri-kreen place great importance on knowing where their next meal is coming from. Because they wander in packs, thri-kreen rarely have any possessions they can't easily carry on their backs. They also don't object to eating other intelligent races if no other food source is available. Some thri-kreen hunting packs say elves are particularly delicious.

Physical Description: They have one set of legs they use for locomotion and two pairs of arms for manipulation. They have short antennae, multifaceted eyes, and a yellow, brown, or gray exoskeleton.

Relations: How a thri-kreen relates to others depends entirely on whether they're members of his clutch; thri-kreen apply notions of clutch allegiance to almost every social situation. A thri-kreen will leap to the defense of a clutchmate without question, but anyone outside the clutch is a potential rival.

Alignment: Thri-kreen respect the order of the clutch, so most tend toward a lawful alignment. Thri-kreen don't think of the world in the absolutes of good and evil as do other races, and so they have no tendency toward one or the other (nor even to neutrality).

Thri-Kreen Lands: Beyond the Jagged Cliffs, north of the city-states, are the great mantis-cities of the tohr-kreen, a settled, civilized group of thri-kreen. Most thri-kreen have no permanent communities, wandering wherever good hunting takes them.

Religion: Thri-kreen find worship of the dragon-kings puzzling, because the dragon-kings don't look after their worshipers the way a clutch leader should. Elemental clerics are respected for their power. Thri-kreen often come into conflict with druids; to a thri-kreen, the animals druids want to protect and preserve are merely tasty meals.

Language: Thri-kreen have no lips and a different tongue than humans have, so they can't make the following sounds: p, b, f, v, m. Their own language, Thri-Kreen, includes a series of clicks and pops that humans have a hard time imitating. Thri-kreen also supplement their verbal communication by emitting pheromones; the pheromone "vocabulary" has only vague, general meanings, but the faint smells enable thri-kreen to express fine shades of meaning and cultural idioms. Only creatures with scent can make out thri-kreen pheromones, and they only understand their meaning if they speak Thri-Kreen.

Names: Thri-kreen have single names that have many glottal stops (denoted with apostrophes) and hard consonant sounds.

Adventurers: Thri-kreen are well suited to the adventurer's life; they're mobile, effective in a fight, and they have a number of useful racial abilities. Furthermore, their clutch-based way of looking at social situations means that they fit in better with a small, egalitarian group than they do a large hierarchy or a teeming city-state.

Thri-Kreen Racial Traits

- +2 Strength, +4 Dexterity, +2 Wisdom, -2 Intelligence, -4 Charisma. Thri-kreen are strong and quick, but they think differently than most humanoids, and have a hard time relating to folk of other races.
- Medium: As Medium creatures, thri-kreen have no special bonuses or penalties due to size.
- Thri-kreen base land speed is 40 feet.
- Immunity to *sleep*. Since thri-kreen do not sleep, they are immune to magic *sleep* effects. A thri-kreen spellcaster still requires 8 hours of rest before preparing spells.
- Darkvision: Thri-kreen can see in the dark up to 60 feet.
- +3 natural armor: A thri-kreen's exoskeleton is resistant to blows.
- Multiple Limbs: Thri-kreen have four arms, and can take the Multiweapon Fighting feat (see the *Monster Manual*)

instead of the Two-Weapon Fighting feat. Thri-kreen can also take the Multiattack feat. These are not bonus feats; thri-kreen characters must spend feat slots to learn these feats.

• Natural Attacks: Thri-kreen can attack with four claws and a bite. The claws deal 1d4 damage, and the bite is a secondary attack (-5 penalty on the attack roll, and half Strength bonus on the damage roll) that deals 1d4 damage. A thri-kreen can attack with a weapon (or multiple weapons) at the normal attack bonus and make either a bite or claw attack as a secondary attack. For example, a thri-kreen ranger with the Multiweapon Fighting feat and armed with three short swords could attack with all three swords at a -2 penalty (the normal penalty for fighting with multiple weapons while using light weapons in its off-hands), and also make a bite attack at a -5 penalty.

• Poison (Ex): Bite, initial damage 1d6 Dex, secondary damage paralysis, DC 11 + Con modifier. A thri-kreen produces sufficient poison for only one bite per day.

• Leap (Ex): Thri-kreen are natural jumpers. They gain a +30 racial bonus on Jump checks.

• Weapon Familiarity: The gythka and chatkcha are martial weapons for thri-kreen.

• Naturally Psionic: Thri-kreen gain 1 extra power point at 1st level, regardless of whether they choose a psionic class or not. They do not gain an inborn power as other races do, instead receiving a number of psi-like abilities.

• *Psi-like Abilities*: 3/day—*chameleon, know direction;* 1/day—*psionic displacement, metaphysical claw.* These abilities are as the powers manifested by a wilder of 1/2 the thri-kreen's Hit Dice (minimum 1st level).

• Monstrous Humanoid Hit Dice: Thri-kreen are 2 HD monstrous humanoids before adding any class levels. A thri-kreen character has 2d8 racial Hit Dice, and receives maximum hit points on his first racial Hit Die (but not his first class Hit Die). A thri-kreen's racial Hit Dice also provide a +2 base attack bonus and base saving throws of Fort +0, Ref +3, and Will +3.

• Racial Skills: A thri-kreen's monstrous humanoid Hit Dice grant him skill points equal to (2 + Int modifier, minimum 1) x 5. Class skills for these skill points are Balance, Climb, Hide, Jump, Listen, and Spot.

• Racial Feats: Thri-kreen gain Deflect Arrows as a racial bonus feat. A thri-kreen's monstrous humanoid levels grant it one feat (although thri-kreen with class levels gain feats based on its total Hit Dice, just like any other character).

• Thri-kreen receive a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks in sandy or arid settings.

• Automatic Languages: Thri-Kreen and Common. Bonus Language: Giant and Halfling.

• Favored Class: Psychic warrior.

• Level Adjustment: +2. D

RANDOM STARTING AGES

Race	Adulthood	All Classes
Aarakocra	10 years	+1d4
Mul	15 years	+1d6
Pterran	12 years	+1d8
Thri-kreen	4 years	+1d4

Races from the *Player's Handbook* and *Expanded Psionics Handbook* are as listed in their respective rulebook.

AGING EFFECTS

Race	Middle Age[1]	Old[2]	Venerable[3]	Maximum Age
Aarakocra	30 years	50 years	65 years	+2d10 years
Mul	40 years	53 years	80 years	+1d10 years
Pterran	30 years	40 years	50 years	+1d10 years
Thri-kreen	25 years	33 years	40 years	+2d8 years

1 At middle age, -1 to Str, Dex, and Con; +1 to Int, Wis, and Cha

2 At old age, -2 to Str, Dex, and Con; +1 to Int, Wis, and Cha

3 At venerable age, -3 to Str, Dex, and Con; +1 to Int, Wis, and Cha

Races from the *Player's Handbook* and *Expanded Psionics Handbook* are as listed in their respective rulebook.

RANDOM HEIGHT AND WEIGHT

Race	Base Height	Height Modifier	Base Weight	Weight Modifier
Aarakocra, male	4'4"	+2d8	80 lb.	x (1d6) lb.
Aarakocra, female	5'10"	+2d10	120 lb.	x (2d4) lb.
Mul, male	5'2"	+2d10	200 lb.	x (2d4) lb.
Mul, female	5'0"	+2d10	185 lb.	x (2d4) lb.
Pterran, male	5'10"	+2d10	140 lb.	x (2d4) lb.
Pterran, female	5'8"	+2d10	115 lb.	x (2d4) lb.
Thri-kreen, male	5'10"	+2d10	160 lb.	x (2d4) lb.
Thri-kreen, female	5'10"	+2d10	160 lb.	x (2d4) lb.

Races from the *Player's Handbook* and *Expanded Psionics Handbook* are as listed in their respective rulebook.

DARK SUN CLASSES

Heroes of a Dying World

by David Noonan · illustrated by Todd Harris and Jason Engle

Players can choose from the base classes listed in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook* and the *Player's Handbook*. The unique nature of the DARK SUN setting leads to some changes to character classes.

BARBARIAN

The two main sources of barbarian characters in the DARK SUN campaign are the slave tribes and hunter-gatherer cultures from beyond the Tablelands.

Slave tribes are groups of escaped slaves and their progeny; they live in the wastes between the city-states, desperately trying to eke out a living as they avoid recapture. Life among the slave tribes is brutal and frequently short. A barbarian PC might be the sole survivor of a natural disaster, slaver attack, or predation by Athas's fearsome monsters. He or she might be exiled from the tribe after a dispute with the chieftain or tribal elders. Because barbarian tribes are generally nomadic, a particular barbarian might return from a long

hunt or scouting expedition to simply find no trace of his or her tribe's encampment.

The forest ridges northwest of the Tyr region have some barbarian halfling tribes, and the Crimson Savannah further northwest is home to thri-kreen barbarians and tribes of other races. Due north of the Tablelands is the unknown; barbarian PCs could hail from there as well. Unlike members of slave tribes, these barbarians will likely be unfamiliar with the customs and power structure of the city-states. If you want to play a stranger-in-a-strange-land PC, choose a barbarian from beyond the Tyr region.

Barbarians otherwise function as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

BARD

While rare, bards do exist on Athas in small, well-organized groups known as troupes. Most bard troupes make their members wealthy not by their frequent performances in the service of nobles and templars, but in their clandestine operations.

As arcane spellcasters with various other abilities, bards work hard to cover their magical abilities with their performances. Spending their lives hiding behind the façade of simple performers, bards learn the intricacies and techniques of covert activities, and as such make excellent spies and assassins. Bards try to keep their abilities secret, despite their fame and familiarity among nobles. Thus, the bard class is relatively unknown by most residents of Athas, as they are seen as mere performers.

Bards otherwise function as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

CLERIC

Unlike most D&D campaigns, DARK SUN has no true gods. Instead, clerics draw their power from one of the elemental planes or a dragon-king. Some clerics treat their favored elemental power or dragon king with obeisance akin to worship, while others are more mercenary, describing their relationship in terms of power exchanged for fealty.

A cleric of a particular element must take Air, Earth, Fire, or Water as one of his domains and can choose any non-elemental domain as his other domain. Elemental clerics tend to be loners, preaching the power of the elements from the wilderness or the street corner. There isn't an organized hierarchy, and there aren't grand temples or cathedrals. Elemental clerics can be of any alignment.

Almost all PC clerics are elemental clerics. The stereotypical elemental cleric is a little crazy, and here's why: To make a pact with the elemental powers, a would-be cleric must put himself completely at the mercy of his chosen element. This means throwing himself off a tall cliff (air), being buried alive (earth), burning at the stake (fire), or falling down a well (water). Those who survive the experience—through direct intervention of an elemental power, obviously—become elemental clerics. Many supplicants fail to capture the attention of the elements and become just one more casualty of the harsh world of Athas.

Clerics of a dragon-king, commonly called templars, control the massive

DRAGON-KING GRANTED DOMAINS

The dragon-kings of the city-states offer the following domains.

Andropinus (Balic): Evil, Law, Travel, War.

Atzetuk (Draj): Destruction, Evil, Magic, Sun.

Dregoth (Raam): Chaos, Death, Evil, Knowledge.

Hamanu (Urik): Evil, Law, Protection, Strength.

Lalali-Puy (Gulg): Evil, Healing, Law, Plant.

Shadow King (Nibenay): Chaos, Evil, Trickery, War.

bureaucracy that runs each city-state. The templars enforce the strict laws of the dragon-king, command the city guard, and otherwise project the will of the dragon-king. Because the dragon-kings are evil, most templars are evil as well, although some neutral templars exist. Depending on their rank within the city-state's bureaucracy, templars usually have a measure of legal authority. Most mid- to high-level templars have the authority to make arrests, seize property, and even render legal judgments on behalf of the dragon-king that rules the city. Even low-level templars can usually give orders to the city guard and arrest free citizens who aren't nobles or merchants.

Dragon-kings don't respond to prayers or grant spells to individual clerics the way most D&D deities do. Each dragon-king controls a conduit to the elemental planes and can grant or deny a templar access to spells with a simple ritual. However, a dragon-king isn't aware of which spells a particular templar is preparing. Dragon-kings can only grant or deny access to the conduit—they don't directly control how the energy passing through the conduit is used.

Clerics otherwise function as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

DRUID

Druids are highly organized in the DARK SUN setting, forming an underground religion that stands in opposition to the dragon-kings and templars. They have major shrines in the wilderness and form revolutionary cells in the cities.

The DARK SUN game has druids that patrol a specific territory and druids who wander Athas, healing the land as they can. PC druids are generally in the latter camp, but they can expect at least a degree of aid from other druids (how much aid depends on how well they're known in druidic circles).

Animal Companion: A druid may begin play with an animal companion selected from the following list: baazrag, kank, kes'trekel, snake (Small or Medium viper), and yallix.

A druid of 4th level or higher can select an animal from the following list: erdlu, jhakar, monitor lizard, seskarran, and snake (constrictor or Large viper). Doing so adjusts her druid level down by 3 for purposes of determining the companion's characteristics and special abilities.

A druid of 7th level or higher can select an animal from the following list: boneclaw baazrag, crodlu, pterrax, razorwing, and snake (Huge viper). Doing so adjusts her druid level down by 6 for purposes of determining the companion's characteristics and special abilities.

A druid of 10th level or higher can select a cilops, heavy crodlu, or inix. Doing so adjusts her druid level down by 9 for purposes of determining the companion's characteristics and special abilities.

A druid of 16th level or higher can select a mastyrial. Doing so adjusts her druid level down by 15 for purposes of determining the companion's characteristics and special abilities.

Animals not in the *Monster Manual* appear in *DUNGEON* #110.

Druids otherwise function as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

FIGHTER

Most fighters in a DARK SUN game are either arena gladiators, soldiers serving in a dragon-king's army, guards of merchant caravans or a noble villa, or mercenaries.

Gladiators tend to focus on melee combat, because that's what the Athasian crowds like to watch. Most are slaves—the property of nobles or merchant houses—but a few have earned their freedom by fighting particularly well. Free gladiators support themselves with the prizes they earn in the arena or by training new gladiators.

For more information on the gladiator events in a typical Athasian arena, see the *Complete Warrior* or *DRAGON* #303.

The bulk of a city-state's army consists of conscripted slaves with only rudimentary martial training, but each dragon-king also keeps several legions of elite soldiers that constantly drill, parade, and patrol. Among the most famous—or notorious—are Urik's Obsidian Guard and the all-female Shadow Consorts of Nibenay. Most military units are commanded by a high-ranking templar in the service of the ruling dragon-king, but particularly prestigious units receive orders directly from the dragon-king they serve.

The merchant houses of Athas likewise have highly organized caravan guards that function like military units in their own right. Most merchant houses have mounted cavalry guards that patrol ahead of caravans and keep the trade routes clear. They also employ foot soldiers that march along with the caravan, keeping it safe from bandits and the many monsters of Athas.

Nobles also employ a number of fighters as bodyguards and personal retinues to safeguard their holdings. Most fighters regard employment by a noble as easy work, because most nobles are content to have their personal guards stand watch in the villa and occasionally parade through town. Only when a noble is involved in some intrigue, the slaves rise up, or a monster attacks will such a fighter see action.

Within the last century, some enterprising freemen and smaller merchant houses have formed small mercenary companies that offer the services of experienced fighters to nobles, merchant houses, and (in times of war) even the dragon-kings themselves. Individual soldiers of fortune have always existed, but organized units-for-hire are a relatively recent development. Most mercenary companies use armed camps in the desert wastelands as their headquarters, with small business offices in the nearest city-state where they make deals and recruit new troops. Among the mercenary companies, the Black Reavers

northwest of Urik and the all-Maenad Vareshi Brigade (hidden within the walls of Balic) are the most famous.

Fighters function as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

MONK

Large monasteries for training monks don't exist in DARK SUN, and so the monks of Athas learn their techniques directly from lone, more experienced monks.

Popular in the gladiatorial arenas for their skill fighting without weapons or armor, many monks make their living as relatively pampered slaves of powerful nobles and templars. A monk is seen as a less dangerous slave than a psychic warrior, yet one almost equally capable of providing unusual and crowd pleasing martial displays. Athasian monks have no problem using their myriad special abilities to impress a crowd. After all, a popular (and profitable) gladiator slave is a safe, well-cared-for one.

Due to their popularity, monk gladiators are frequently freed in their later years, and most of them train other freemen in their ways. These free monks often follow their teachers into the arenas in search of wealth and further training. Others use their skills to survive the harsh world outside the cities, finding their abilities and discipline boons in the chaotic and unpredictable sands of Athas.

Monks function as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

PALADIN

Like the monk, a paladin relies on her discipline to make sense of a chaotic world. While others might panic when faced by some new and unexpected threat bursting from the sands, the paladin quickly assesses the situation and forms a plan of action.

Athasian paladins don't worship any particular god, but they have a strong and unbending belief in the supremacy of law and goodness.

Paladins are extremely rare in Athas for several reasons. The harsh nature of the desert world puts a high premium on flexibility and adaptability, neither of which the paladin is particularly known for. In addition, dragon-kings take umbrage at a paladin's unerring goodness and continuous striving for the freedom of city-states from the tyranny of dragon-kings. Finally, most paladins are loners, as many beings in Athas can't reconcile the needs of survival with the paladin's stubborn adherence to a strict code of morality.

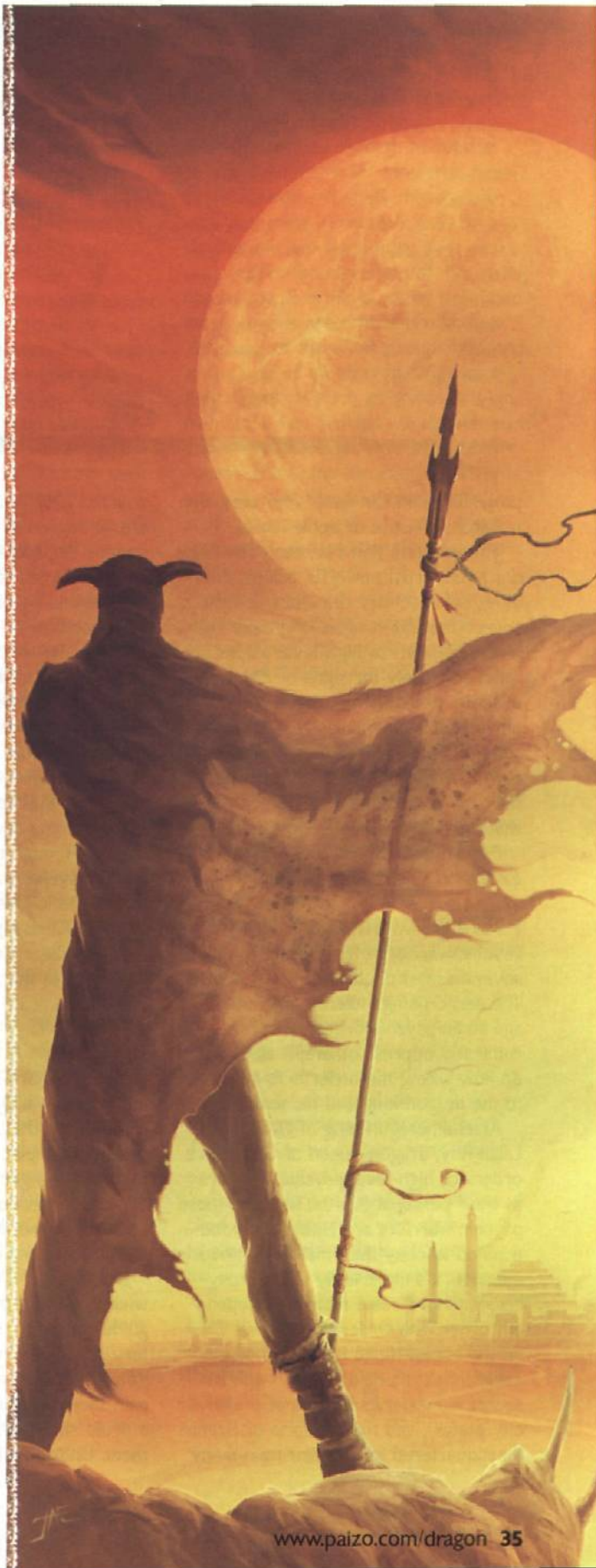
Special mount: The paladin's special mount is typically a kank (for a Medium paladin) or a baazrag (for a Small paladin). See *DUNGEON* #110 for a description of these creatures.

Paladins otherwise function as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

PSION

Psionics are commonplace in the DARK SUN setting—more so than traditional magic.

Because many residents of the city-states have a little psionic power themselves, psionics are part of everyday life. A resident of Tyr expects a master blacksmith to use *psionic fabricate* in addition to the mundane skills of the smith. Many nobles employ egoist healers to keep themselves healthy and telepaths to keep their slaves in line. Each city-state has one or more colleges and academies devoted to the pursuit of psionic knowledge, and a



FAMILIARS ON ATHAS

The following creatures are available as familiars in a DARK SUN campaign. Each creature is described in detail in *DUNGEON* #110.

Familiar	Special
• Critic lizard	Master gains a +2 bonus on Reflex saves
• Floater	Master gains a +3 bonus on Sense Motive checks
• Hurrum, speckled	Master gains a +3 bonus on Diplomacy checks
• Jankx	Master gains a +3 bonus on Listen checks
• Kes'trekel	Master gains a +2 bonus on Fortitude saves
• Mulworm	Master gains +3 hit points
• Ramphor	Master gains a +3 bonus on Spot checks
• Snake, Tiny viper	Master gains a +3 bonus on Bluff checks
• Z'tal	Master gains a +3 bonus on Intimidate checks

powerful psion can easily find work with a merchant house or noble family.

The templars that rule each city-state don't fully trust powerful psions, however, because they draw power from a source that the dragon-king can't control. Most mid- to high-level psions are watched closely for signs of disloyalty to the city-state. The dragon-kings—powerful psions themselves—are smart enough not to spurn psionic subordinates completely. Most dragon-kings have small cabals of well-trained psions that provide espionage and security.

Psions function as described in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*.

PSYCHIC WARRIOR

Psychic warriors often belong to one of several esoteric, quasi-religious orders. The dragon-kings tolerate and encourage some psychic orders, while they ruthlessly oppress others; it all depends on how willing the order is to kowtow to the dragon-king and his templars.

Atzetuk, dragon-king of Draj, and Lalali-Puy, dragon-queen of Gulg, have orders of high-level psychic warriors as their personal guards. Because those psychic warriors are ruthlessly indoctrinated to obey their masters without question, it's more likely that PC psychic warriors come from an independent order. The Order of the Feral Claw (in the Forest Ridge northwest of the Tablelands), the Pale Faction (with its secret monasteries in each of the seven city-states), and the Disciples of Szanae (headquartered in Cromlin) train many psychic warriors and grant their graduates a degree of autonomy. Other groups of psychic warriors form secret cabals devoted to specific martial arts and psionic fighting techniques. Whether they're open or secretive, independent or controlled by a dragon-king, groups of psychic warriors combine rigorous physical training with guided meditations that gradually unlock psionic potential.

Most psychic warriors retain the self-discipline they learned during their initial training and have lawful alignments, although this isn't a requirement. A few psychic warriors have spurned the monastic lifestyle completely and do battle in Athas's gladiator arenas.

Psychic warriors function as described in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*.

RANGER

Ranger PCs are somewhat more important in a DARK SUN game than in traditional D&D, because more of the action takes place outdoors rather than in a dungeon. The wilds of Athas are a treacherous place, where a party unskilled in survival won't last for more than a day or two.

Most ranger PCs learned their skills while traveling the wastes of Athas as guides, hunters, or scouts for a military organization. Many rangers enjoy good relations with druids, and some gain their first animal companion after a druid shows them how to call one to them. Unlike druids, however, rangers tend to prefer solitude or small, informal groups. The streets and buildings of an Athasian city seem as dangerous to a typical ranger as the wastes are to a typical citizen of a city-state.

Rangers function as described in the *Player's Handbook*, except that a ranger's choices for animal companions are different (see the Druid section), and the list of potential favored enemies includes different monsters in each category. In other words, some of the obvious choices for favored enemy in standard D&D (evil outsiders, dragons) might come up less in a DARK SUN game.

ROGUE

DARK SUN rogues come from all walks of life: slave, freeman, merchant, and noble. The dominant settings for DARK SUN adventures are the wilderness and the city-states—both places that reward the skilled PC, and no PC has more skill points than a rogue.

Many caravan masters working for one of Athas's merchant houses are mid- to high-level rogues, and most senior members of the merchant class have at least some levels in the rogue class. Those who take valuable cargoes along the dangerous roads of Athas have to be shrewd bargainers, astute wilderness guides, and trained combatants.

Every city-state has one or more thieves' guilds, although they're circumspect enough to avoid the attention of the dragon-king. From their well-hidden lairs, the thieves' guilds often run the black market in everything from arcane spell components to illegal drugs and poisons. Many members are accomplished burglars and bandits, surrendering a percentage of their ill-gotten gains in exchange for the guild's protection and support. Thieves' guilds also fence stolen goods, often selling them to less scrupulous merchant houses whose caravans then spirit the loot out of the city-state.

Rogues function as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

SORCERER

Rarest of the spellcasting classes, sorcerers combine the flexibility of psions with the potentially devastating power of the wizard. The ability to become a

sorcerer seems to occur randomly, and most of those who discover they have the gift do not reveal it to anyone.

Unlike wizards, who typically spend many years honing their craft, sorcerers generally gain their abilities suddenly, during adolescence. Without quite understanding the destructive power they wield, most youths who discover their latent sorcery find it exciting and cast the most powerful spells they can. They often learn the difference between preserving and defiling magic the hard way.

Because of the destruction wrought by defilers, and the difficulty in discovering who has the ability to cast sorcerous spells, every city-state has outlawed sorcery. Known and suspected sorcerers face execution. As a result, sorcerers have learned to hide their spellcasting, by masking their arcane gestures, whispering their verbal components, and hiding on their persons the strange materials and components they need to cast spells. Many attempt to pass themselves as psions, while bolder sorcerers carry a fake spellbook, knowing that the laws are slightly more lenient on wizards than on sorcerers.

Sorcerers function as described in the *Player's Handbook*, except as noted below.

Skills: Sleight of Hand is an additional class skill for sorcerers, who often use it to obscure their somatic gestures from the prying eyes of any nearby templars.

Familiar: Sorcerers can choose animals from the Familiars on Athas table for their familiars. They otherwise follow the rules set out on page 32 of the *Player's Handbook*.

SOULKNIFE

Soulknives are rare on Athas. This poses no particular restriction for PCs, but among the general populace, there simply aren't many soulknives. Most denizens of Athas don't make the distinction between psychic warriors and soulknives, and indeed, few organizations devoted to training would-be soulknives exist.

The Whetstone Temple in Tyr trains soulknives, and claims to be able to teach the ability to manifest a mindblade to anyone willing to undergo their rigorous mental and physical training. Conversely, the Order of Maulirik in the city-state of Draj contends that only those of certain bloodlines are capable of becoming soulknives, and even then, the ability can lie latent for generations. They use a combination of clairsentient probing and genealogical research to identify those with the potential to become soulknives, then offer membership in the order for those who qualify. Groups of soulknives aren't as well-established as the psychic warrior orders, so most mid- to high-level soulknives are either actively leading such organizations or completely independent of them.

Some soulknives wind up using their martial prowess as gladiators, because the sparkle of their mindblades are sure crowd-pleasers. They also can't be disarmed for more than a few seconds, and a sundered mindblade can simply be reformed with a thought. Soulknife gladiators tend to be patient combatants who wear down their foes gradually.

Other soulknives favor more subtle work. Many high-ranking nobles have been slain by a soulknife who walked into a "safe" area and created a weapon out of thin air.

Soulknives function as described in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*.

WILDER

Wilder PCs are generally mixed in with their psion brethren. The distinction between wilder and psion is lost on most residents of Athas. Accordingly, NPCs with a level or two of wilder are common in a DARK SUN game.

Among the city-states, the ability to use psionic powers like a wilder seems to emerge in outcasts of one kind or another—often after a physical or emotional trauma of some sort. Folk tales abound involving badly beaten slaves who become wilders and take vengeance on their cruel masters. Slave tribes wandering the desert sometimes find that the combination of heat stroke and starvation causes wilder abilities to emerge.

Finally, maenads seem to have a natural affinity for wilder-style psionics. Among maenads, it's the psions who are rare and the wilders who are relatively common.

Wilders function as described in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*.

WIZARD

Arcane magic is against the law in most of the city-states of Athas, because the dragon-kings don't want further defiling (other than by themselves), and they're loath to support potential future rivals. In secret, however, wizards still study the arcane arts, gathering in secret cabals or reading ancient texts in solitude.

Except in the city-state of Tyr, using arcane magic is illegal, so by definition most wizards are criminals or rebels. Yet many of the other groups opposed to the rule of the dragon-kings and their templars, such as druids and elemental clerics, distrust wizards because any wizard is a potential defiler of Athas's remaining life energy. Wizards don't even necessarily trust other wizards, because every wizard is sorely tempted by the additional power that defiler magic offers.

Most PC wizards are revolutionaries, working secretly to overthrow the dragon-kings and create a more just society in their place. However, wizards face greater temptations than most characters, because every spell they cast is an opportunity to ravage the planet further in exchange for more power. Only those wizards who never succumb to the temptation have the right to call themselves preservers. All others are, to greater or lesser degrees, defilers.

Wizard PCs generally don't reveal their true nature to others. If you play a wizard, you'll want to think about a "cover story" to present to NPCs, and you'll want to consider whether and how you'll let your fellow PCs in on your secret. Many wizards pretend to be psions or elemental clerics.

The wizard class functions as described in the *Player's Handbook*, except as noted below.

Skills: Sleight of Hand is an additional class skill for wizards, who often use it to obscure their somatic gestures from the prying eyes of any nearby templars.

Familiar: Wizards can choose animals from the Familiars on Athas table for their familiars. They otherwise follow the rules set out on page 32 of the *Player's Handbook*.

DARK SUN

DARK SUN
EQUIPMENT & RULES
Tempered by a Burning World

by David Noonan · illustrated by Eric Polack, Todd Harris, and Jason Engle

The world of Dark Sun is extremely metal-poor, with only a few bronze and iron mines turning out ore in any quantities. Thus, many items that would otherwise be made from metal are fashioned from stone, bone, or ceramics instead. It's common to see a short sword made from the tooth of a spinewyrm, or an axe of glossy obsidian.

The shortage of metal affects character equipment in three important ways: Athasian currency is based on ceramic coins, the cost of gear varies depending on what it's made of, and more exotic metals are simply unavailable.

CURRENCY

Gold is too scarce to make good currency (most of it is used in expensive jewelry), and silver is only slightly more common. For millennia, templar-controlled kilns in each of the city-states have manufactured ceramic coins with the visage of a dragon-king on one side and a cluster of notches on the other. The ceramic piece (cp) is the basic unit of currency across the Tablelands. The notches on the "tails" side radiate from a center point so you can break a ceramic piece into ten pie-shaped "bits." Ten bits equal one ceramic piece. An Athasian ceramic piece has the same purchasing power as a D&D gold piece, while a bit has the same purchasing power as a standard D&D silver piece. In most cases, you can simply translate the gp cost into a cp cost, but weapons and armor have special rules.

The merchant houses mint metal coins, which are stamped with the symbol of the house on one side and the year they were made on the reverse. A silver "house coin" is worth 10 ceramic pieces, and a gold "house coin" is worth 100 ceramic pieces. It's uncommon to see house coins in general circulation; the houses mostly use them in large transactions with each other and with the city-state governments.

WEAPONS

The harsh Dark Sun setting lacks the expert metallurgy of normal D&D worlds, due in no small part to its lack of large metal deposits. Athas is not devoid of weaponry, however, as protection is needed from the terrible monsters that lurk just outside (or within) the gates of the city-states. Those who live on Athas have adapted to their environment by crafting weapons from whatever material they have at hand, whether bone and wood or low-quality bronze and iron.

Weapon Materials

The ability to make steel is largely unknown on Athas, and even the iron implements crafted by smiths often have flaws invisible to the eye. Metals such as mithral, adamantine, and platinum simply don't exist, or they've never been discovered. The following describes how the materials most Dark Sun weapons are made from affect their use.

Bone: Most weapons in Dark Sun are made of bone or stone. Weapons made of bone have a -2 penalty on attacks and damage (with a minimum damage of 1). Bone has a hardness of 6 and 10 hit points per inch of thickness. Bone weapons weigh half as much as their listed weight in the *Player's Handbook*.

A bone weapon has the same price in ceramic pieces as its gold-piece price in the *Player's Handbook*. The New Dark Sun Weapons table lists prices presuming the weapons are made of stone, bone, or wood.

Blood Obsidian: When volcanoes are created through defiler magic, veins of blood obsidian result. Weapons made from blood obsidian have a natural enhancement bonus of +1 on damage. This bonus does not stack with any other enhancement bonus. Thus, a blood obsidian scimitar with a +4 magic enhancement bonus effectively has a +4 enhancement bonus on both attacks and damage. In an area where magic does not function, it retains its natural +1 enhancement bonus on damage. A masterwork blood obsidian scimitar would have a +1 bonus on both attacks and damage. Blood obsidian has a hardness of 12 and 30 hit points per inch of thickness.

Weapons made from blood obsidian cost 2,000 more (in ceramic pieces) than the gold-piece price listed in the *Player's Handbook*.

Bronze: Weapons of bronze, while clearly inferior to iron items, are not nearly as bad as stone or bone weapons. Their attack and damage penalty is only -1. Bronze has a hardness of 9 and 20 hit points per inch of thickness.

Weapons forged of bronze cost 5 times (in ceramic pieces) the gold-piece value listed in the *Player's Handbook*.

Iron: Iron works as described in the *Player's Handbook*. It has a hardness of 10 and 30 hit points per inch of thickness. Iron weapons are not cold iron weapons and do not overcome damage reduction. Cold iron weapons cost twice as much as their normal iron counterparts and function as described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Weapons forged of iron cost 10 times (in ceramic pieces) the gold piece value listed in the *Player's Handbook*.

Stone: Weapons made of stone have a -2 penalty on attacks and damage (with a minimum damage of 1). Stone has a hardness of 8 and 15 hit points per inch of thickness. Stone sling bullets have no penalty on attacks or damage.

A stone weapon has the same price in ceramic pieces as its gold-piece price in the *Player's Handbook*. The New Dark Sun Weapons table lists prices presuming the weapons are made of stone, bone, or wood.

Wood: Only certain weapons can effectively be made of wood. The club, quarterstaff, sap, great club, and all bows and crossbows can be made from wood without suffering a penalty. Any bludgeoning weapon can also be constructed from wood, but those not noted above suffer a -3 penalty on attacks and damage (with a minimum damage of 1). Weapons that deal piercing or slashing damage cannot be made of wood. Wood has a hardness of 5 and 10 hit points per inch.

A wooden weapon has the same price in ceramic pieces as its gold-piece price in the *Player's Handbook*.

New Weapons in Dark Sun

The following new weapons are unique to Dark Sun. The New Dark Sun Weapons table lists damage, range, weight, and cost information for these weapons. Other data can be found in the explanatory text below.

Cahulaks: This weapon consists of a pair of four-bladed heads tied to either end of a 12-foot rope. Despite the cahulak's 10 foot reach it can be used to attack an adjacent foe.

Because the rope can wrap around an enemy's leg or other limb, you can make trip attacks with it. If you're tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop the cahulak to avoid being tripped.

When using a cahulak, you get a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to disarm an opponent (including the roll to avoid being disarmed if such an attack fails).

The Weapon Finesse feat does not apply to the cahulak.

Chatkcha: This exotic ranged weapon is a crystalline throwing wedge. This weapon is as it appears in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*.

Gythka: This two-handed exotic melee weapon is a polearm with a blade at each end. You can fight with it

DARK SUN WEAPON HIT POINTS

	Wood (Hardness 5)	Bone (Hardness 6)	Stone (Hardness 8)	Bronze (Hardness 9)	Iron (Hardness 10)	Blood Obsidian (Hardness 12)
Light blade	–	1	1	1	2	2
One-handed blade	–	2	3	4	5	5
Two-handed blade	–	3	5	7	10	10
Light hafted weapon	2	3	5	7	10	10
One-handed hafted weapon	5	6	10	14	20	20
Two-handed hafted weapon	10	10	15	20	30	30
Projectile weapon	5	6	–	14	20	–

NEW DARK SUN WEAPONS

Exotic Weapons	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Dmg (L)	Crit.	Range	Cost*	Weight	Type
Two-Handed Melee Weapons								
Cahulaks**	1d6	2d4	2d6	x2	–	25 cp	1 lb.	Piercing
Gythka‡	1d8/1d8	1d10/1d10	2d8/2d8	x2	–	60 cp	25 lb.	Slashing
Ranged Weapon								
Chatkcha	1d4	1d6	1d8	18-20/x2	20 ft.	1 cp	1 lb.	Slashing

*The listed cost is for bone, stone, or wood weapons. Weapons of other materials cost more. See the Weapon Materials section.

**Reach weapon.

‡Double weapon.

DONNING ARMOR

Armor Type	Don	Don Hastily	Remove*
Bone, cord, wood, leather scale	1 minute	5 rounds	1 minute
Bark, chitin, shell	4 minutes	1 minute	1 minute

*If you have some help, cut this time in half. A single character doing nothing else can help one or two adjacent characters. Two characters can't help each other don armor at the same time.

as if fighting with two weapons, but if you do, you incur all the normal attack penalties associated with fighting with two weapons, just as if you were using a one-handed weapon and a light weapon. A thri-kreen can wield two gythkas at once as double weapons due to its four arms, but takes penalties as if its off-hand weapon was a one-handed weapon, not a light weapon. This weapon is as it appears in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*.

Dark Sun Names for Weapons

As archetypical to the DARK SUN setting as merciless gladiators and thri-kreen raiders are the savage weapons they invariably wield. Whether created by insectile hands, chipped from stone, or improvised from the sun-bleached bones of a desert monstrosity, the primitive weapons of Athas are just as deadly as those of any other world. Those familiar with the DARK SUN setting will remember weapons like the alhulak, chatkcha, and trikal. While some of these weapons have unique statistics and abilities all their own, others duplicate the statistics of better known D&D weapons and differ only in their description. Here is a list of some well-known DARK SUN arms and the weapons in the *Player's Handbook* that they equate to.

Alhulak: A 5-foot rope with a four-bladed grappling hook on the end. This weapon is effectively a heavy flail.

Carrikal: An axe made from the jaw of a mekillot, this weapon functions as a battleaxe.

Dragon's Paw: This weapon is a foot-long blade on either end of a quarterstaff. A curved blade is mounted in the middle of the staff, with gaps to put your hands through. It equates to an orc double axe.

Puchik: A dagger with hand guards and a grip perpendicular to the blade, it functions as a punching dagger.

Tortoise Blade: A small shield with a foot-long blade extending from an edge. This weapon is treated as a small shield with a shield spike that deals slashing damage.

DARK SUN ARMOR AND SHIELDS

Armor	Cost	Armor Bonus	Max Dex Bonus	Armor Check Penalty	Arcane Spell Failure	Speed (30 ft.)	(20 ft.)	Weight‡
Light armor								
Padded	5 cp	+1	+8	0	5%	30 ft.	20 ft.	10 lb.
Bark	5 cp	+2	+5	-2	15%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lb.
Cord	15 cp	+2	+5	-1	5%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lb.
Leather	10 cp	+2	+6	0	10%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lb.
Bone	20 cp	+3	+4	-3	15%	30 ft.	20 ft.	20 lb.
Wood	15 cp	+3	+4	-3	15%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lb.
Studded leather	125 cp	+3	+5	-1	15%	30 ft.	20 ft.	20 lb.
Leather scale	35 cp	+3	+6	-2	15%	30 ft.	20 ft.	20 lb.
Medium armor								
Shell	25 cp	+3	+3	-2	20%	20 ft.	15 ft.	20 lb.
Hide	15 cp	+3	+4	-3	20%	20 ft.	15 ft.	25 lb.
Bronze breastplate	200 cp	+4	+4	-4	25%	20 ft.	15 ft.	30 lb.
Heavy armor								
Chitin	100 cp	+5	+0	-6	35%	20 ft.*	15 ft.*	35 lb.
Bronze half-plate	600 cp	+6	+1	-7	40%	20 ft.*	15 ft.*	50 lb.
Shields								
Buckler	15 cp	+1	—	-1	5%	—	—	5 lb.
Buckler, beetle	6,600 cp	+2	—	-1	5%	—	—	5 lb.
Shield, light, wooden	3 cp	+1	—	-1	5%	—	—	5 lb.
Shield, light, bronze	9 cp	+1	—	-1	5%	—	—	6 lb.
Shield, heavy, wooden	7 cp	+2	—	-2	15%	—	—	10 lb.
Shield, heavy, bronze	20 cp	+2	—	-2	15%	—	—	15 lb.
Shield, tower**	30 cp	+4	—	-10	50%	—	—	45 lb.

*When running in heavy armor, you move only triple you speed, not quadruple.

**The tower shield can instead grant you cover. See the description.

‡Armor fitted for Small characters weighs half as much.

Trikal: This polearm has three blades on top and spikes below that. This weapon is effectively a halberd.

ARMOR

The DARK SUN Armor and Shields table shows what armor is generally available on Athas. It includes several armor types described in the *Arms & Equipment Guide*. Any armor not listed on the table is rare and must be made of iron. Iron armor costs 5 times (in ceramic pieces) the gold piece value listed in the *Player's Handbook* and weighs half again (+50%) as much.

Bark: Carefully crafted from the thick bark of trees, bark armor is treated to prevent it from becoming brittle over time. Large plates of bark cover the torso and back, while strips of it are fastened to cloth or leather backing to cover the arms and legs.

Bone: Made from the bones of animals or slaughtered foes, bone armor consists of a leather or cloth coat reinforced with strips of bone. It only covers the torso, allowing the limbs freedom to move.

Bronze Breastplate: This is essentially the same as the steel breastplate presented in the *Player's Handbook*, except that it is made of bronze.

Bronze Half-Plate: The rarest noniron armor on Athas, bronze half-plate only differs from the the *Player's Handbook*'s half-plate in its weaker material.

Buckler: Bucklers are usually made from the scapula of an animal and reinforced with leather straps.

Buckler, Beetle: This buckler is actually a Tiny scarab beetle that latches onto the forearm. It takes a day of wearing the beetle for it to attune to a new owner before it grants an Armor Class bonus. After this day has ended, the beetle buckler acts as a masterwork buckler with a nonmagical +1 enhancement bonus to Armor Class.

A command word causes the beetle to fly around its owner, blocking ranged attacks (as the Deflect Arrows feat, but using the beetle's Reflex save bonus instead of its owner's). The beetle only attacks to defend itself.

Beetle Buckler: CR 1/2; Tiny vermin; HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +6; Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); AC 24 (touch 18, flat-footed 18); Base Atk +0; Grp -9; Atk/Full Atk -1 melee (1d3-5/20, bite); Face/Reach 2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.; SQ Deflect

arrows, vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +0; Str 1, Dex 23, Con 10, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Hide +14, Listen +4, Move Silently +10, Spot +4.

Deflect Arrows (Ex): When detached from its shield position, a beetle buckler darts about in its owner's space, blocking one ranged attack per round as the Deflect Arrows feat.

Vermin Traits: Immune to all mind-influencing effects; darkvision 60 ft.

Chitin: Many of the creatures on Athas have tough exoskeletons made of thick chitin. As these plentiful creatures are often a source of food, it didn't take long for the people of the Tablelands to make their exoskeletons into wearable armor. Chitin armor is comprised of chitin plates covering the wearer's torso, as well as smaller pieces on the joints and limbs.

Cord: Made from knotted rope, cord armor is most common among halflings and tribes that live away from the city-states.

Hide: Cured and uncured animal skins, layered thickest over the chest and back, form this armor.

Leather: Hardened leather plates form the chest and back pieces, and are used to cover other vital areas such as joints. These hardened leather plates are held together with thinner pieces of leather to allow some freedom of movement.

Leather Scale: Made of cured leather scales, leather scale armor is identical to regular steel scale mail except in its material.

Padded: This armor is made by layering oiled canvas between silk, with a cotton or wool layer underneath. Popular among nobles, wealthy merchants, and others who wish to protect themselves without drawing attention, the outer layer of silk can be decorated as elaborately as normal clothes.

Shell: Made from the treated shells of tortoises and more exotic creatures, the alchemical process used to create shell armor makes it less brittle, so when struck it gives instead of shattering. Large shells form chest and back plates, with smaller shells covering joints and other vital areas.

Shields: Shields are large pieces of wood or metal that strap to the arm. They have wood grips that must be held, but the grips of small shields are such that the wielder can hold other items. A weapon cannot be wielded with the hand gripping the shield.

Studded Leather: Athasian studded leather is the same as presented in the *Player's Handbook*, except that it uses bone or stone studs instead of metal.

Wood: Like bone armor, wood armor is made of cloth or leather strips with wood strips sewn in.

DARK SUN RULES

The following rules supplement those in the core rulebooks and reflect the character of the DARK SUN setting.

Caste

For centuries, the city-states of Athas have been caste-based societies. Each caste has specific legal rights, but the castes aren't as vertically hierarchical as many real-world societies are. For example, the nobles aren't necessarily in a better or higher caste than the merchants—they're just in a different caste. Obviously, the lot of a slave is worse than everybody else, and the dragon-kings sit atop it all. In between those extremes are a number of more-or-less "equal" castes.

When you make a new character, consider carefully in which caste you'd like to start. It's mostly a role-playing choice. You might occasionally face caste-related difficulties, but your choice of caste is spice for your character, not the main dish.

Slaves

Almost all manual labor and a fair degree of skilled labor and services are performed by slaves. All of the other castes can—and do—own slaves. Slaves are generally treated poorly, but they get water and regular meals because their masters have an incentive to keep them alive. Slaves have no rights, but they have the same legal protections that any other property does. A few slaves, such as temple scribes and gladiatorial champions, have lives that most residents of Athas would consider pampered. Some slaves are born to slave parents, while others began life in another caste but became slaves due to debts or as legal punishment. The laborers building the new pyramid to the dragon-king and the servant who brings you cool water in the merchant palace are probably slaves.

Freemen

A relatively small class, freemen are mostly individual artisans who were born to freemen. Some few are former slaves who won their freedom or escaped slaves who've successfully left their old identities behind. Life is a struggle to earn money for enough water, food, and shelter to stay alive. The bartender in the public house and the fruit-cart vendor in the market square are probably freemen.

Merchants

Not everyone who buys and sells goods is a merchant in the caste sense of the word. Powerful merchant families form their own caste, and they are technically citizens of their merchant house, not citizens of the city in which they reside. Because the merchant houses often retaliate en masse against overzealous templars who hassle their merchants, members of the caste have a degree of immunity from the petty injustices of the templars. However, the merchant houses have hierarchies and intrigues of their own, and being a merchant means being at the beck and call of your extended family. Merchants are usually born into their caste, although particularly promising freemen or nobles can sometimes marry or earn their way into the caste. The caravan leader you meet on the road is a merchant, and so is the canny bargainer in the immense tent in the bazaar.

Nobles

The noble caste is made up of powerful landowners who run the farms that surround each city-state. Most nobles have homes on the land they own, but they spend most of their time in villas within the city walls. You have to be born or married into this caste, and nobles are generally loath to marry members of other castes. Nobles have a degree of protection from the excesses of the templars—only high-ranking templars dare arrest or challenge a noble. Younger nobles with

COMMON ATHASIAN LANGUAGES

Language	Typical User
Aarakocra	Aarakocras
Aquan	Creatures from the Plane of Water
Auran	Creatures from the Plane of Air
Dwarven	Dwarves, some muls
Elven	Elves, a few half-elves
Giant	Braxats, beast-head giants, tareks
Gith	Gith
Halfling	Halflings, residents of Forest Ridge
Ignan	Creatures from the Plane of Fire
Maenadi	Maenads
Pterran	Pterrans, nikaals, ssurrans
Terran	Creatures from the Plane of Earth
Thri-Kreen	Thri-kreen

many siblings sometimes find their way into the military or the adventuring life because they have a degree of autonomy but not much in the way of responsibilities. The people with the good seats at the arena are nobles. So are the people in the palanquins that weave their way through the streets of the city.

Templars

In addition to being clerics, templars are also the bureaucrats who keep the city-states running. They're responsible for everything from clean drinking water in the wells to the city's defenses. Each city-state has its own hierarchy of templars. Most templars can make arrests on real or trumped-up charges; in the city-states, your access to real justice depends almost entirely on your relationship to the dragon-king and high-ranking templars. Templars choose capable children from the freemen and noble classes to take templar training. The city watchman who investigates a murder is probably a templar, and so is the cleric providing healing at the dragon-king's temple.

Outsiders

As a caste (not a creature type), outsiders are those from outside the society of the city-states: thri-kreen warriors, pterran traders from Lost Scale, and so on. They're technically freemen, but templars tend to hassle them more. Particularly exotic outsiders will attract a lot of attention from passersby.

Skills

All the skills in the *Player's Handbook* and *Expanded Psionics Handbook* are available on Athas. Three have minor changes, as detailed below.

Sleight of Hand

As an additional use of the Sleight of Hand skill, spellcasters can make their verbal and somatic components less obtrusive, muttering magic words under their breath and making magic gestures within their sleeves. When you attempt to cast a spell unobtrusively, your Sleight of Hand check is opposed by the observer's Spot check. The observer's success doesn't prevent you from casting the spell, just from doing it unnoticed.

Speak Language

The Common Athasian Languages sidebar presents the languages spoken on Athas. These are the most common languages characters will speak and come into contact with. Other languages are less common and cost three skill points to learn. You can still pick them as a bonus language if you justify it in your character's background. They are listed on the Uncommon Athasian Languages sidebar.

Dialects: Each of the seven city-states has its own dialect of Trade Tongue that its residents use in everyday conversation. The dialects (Balician, Draji, Gulgan, Nibenese, Raamin, Tyric, and Uriki) are mutually intelligible, and a DC 10 Sense Motive check is sufficient to identify the speaker's city of origin after listening to her speak for 1 minute or more. Characters attempting to conceal their regional accent or adopt another accent use a Disguise check opposed by the listener's Sense Motive check.

Swim

Only clerics with the Water domain have Swim as a class skill. There isn't enough standing water on Athas for any other character to need to know how to swim.

Magic and Psionics

The following changes apply to rules laid out in the *Player's Handbook* and the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*.

Magic and Psionics are Mostly Different

On the world of Athas, magic and psionics are different for some purposes, but equivalent for others. This reflects the unique nature of reality in the world of DARK SUN, and the fact that study of psionics and magic occur in parallel.

Same: Effects that dispel or negate magic and psionics function equally well against both, because they enforce the mundane reality of Athas. A *negate psionics* power will make a wizard's *mage armor* spell go away, and a cleric will be unable to cast spells within a *null psionics* field. Likewise, a *dispel magic* spell will end an *offensive prescience* power, and no psion could use *ego whip* from within an *antimagic field*. Similarly, spell resistance and power resistance work equally well against both spells and psionics.

Different: You can shut down magic and psionics with the same effect, but the two means of altering reality retain some important differences. *Detect magic* notes the presence of psionics, and the *detect psionics* power will spot a spell. However, such detection spells and powers only note the presence of a "foreign" aura, not its strength or school/discipline. For example, a *detect magic* spell will indicate that a psychic warrior has two auras on him, but it won't reveal that they're faint telepathy (*detect hostile intent*) and moderate psychokinesis (*inertial barrier*). The spellcaster knows only that there are two psionic auras on the psychic warrior. Likewise, a *detect psionics* spell cast on a crypt door will reveal only a magic aura, not that it's the moderate necromancy aura of an *enervation* trap.

Arcane Magic

The principles of psionics and divine magic are well understood, but arcane magic on Athas has been driven underground for centuries by the machinations of the dragon-kings. Over the years, arcane spellcasters have learned to adapt by making their spells more difficult to analyze and their castings more unobtrusive.

Accordingly, many DCs to discern or analyze arcane magic are higher than in standard D&D. In the DARK SUN campaign, the Spellcraft DC to figure out an arcane aura's school of magic (with *detect magic* or *arcane sight*, for example) is 20 + spell level. The higher DC applies whether the observer is an arcane caster or not. The Spellcraft DC to identify a spell as it's cast is 20 + spell level if it's an arcane spell. Identifying an arcane spell that's already in place (or materials created or shaped by arcane magic) requires a Spellcraft check with a DC of 25 + spell level. Identifying an arcane spell targeted on you after you attempt a saving throw requires a Spellcraft check with a DC of 30 + spell level.

Defiler Magic: When an arcane spellcaster casts a spell, she taps into the life energy of Athas. Most spellcasters train their apprentices to avoid taking too much energy and thereby killing all plant life in the vicinity, because the stolen energy doesn't return for years. Thus, arcane magic can defile the land, leaving it a scarred, lifeless landscape.

Every arcane spellcaster knows, however, that she's voluntarily limiting the power of her spells in this way. With any spell she casts, she can choose to cast off her self-imposed limits and defile the land around her in exchange for a rush of arcane power. Good aligned PCs should avoid defiling the land, and PCs of all alignments should worry about antagonizing other PCs and NPCs—in particular the dragon-kings—by doing so. For defiling rules, see "DARK SUN: Defilers of Athas" in *DRAGON* #315.

Spells and Powers

Some of the spells described in the *Player's Handbook* have been changed to reflect life on Athas.

The *summon monster* and *summon nature's ally* spells have different creatures available to them. Obviously, bears, wolves, and eagles don't exist in DARK SUN, so the real world animals have largely been replaced with Athasian ones. Summoning animals is strictly the province of druids, so they've been taken off the *summon monster* lists. Conversely, wizards and elemental clerics have a much closer connection to the Inner Planes than druids do, so druids get access to summoned elementals only at high levels. Creatures not found in the *Monster Manual* appear in *DUNGEON* #110.

Summon Monster I: Available creatures are earthdelver, firesnake, rainrunner, and windraptor.

Summon Monster II: Available creatures are cinderbrute, cloudscout, sandknight, and wavearcher.

Summon Monster III: Available creatures are crysmal; elemental, Small (any); and thoqqua.

Summon Monster IV: Available creatures are arrowhawk, juvenile; mephit (any); salamander, flamebrother; tojanida, juvenile; and xorn, minor.

Summon Monster V: Available creatures are arrowhawk, adult; elemental, Medium (any); and tojanida, adult.

Summon Monster VI: Available creatures are belker; elemental, Large (any); ravid; salamander, average; xill; and xorn, average.

Summon Monster VII: Available creatures are arrowhawk, elder; djinni (genie); elemental, Huge (any); invisible stalker; rast; and xorn, elder.

Summon Monster VIII: Available creatures are chaos beast; salamander, noble; and tojanida, elder.

Summon Monster IX: Available creatures are elemental, elder (any).

Summon Nature's Ally I: Available creatures are baazrag, kes'trekel, snake (Small viper), and yallix.

Summon Nature's Ally II: Available creatures are seskarran and snake (Medium viper).

Summon Nature's Ally III: Available creatures are jhakar, kank, snake (constrictor), and snake (Large viper).

Summon Nature's Ally IV: Available creatures are boneclaw baazrag, crodlu, fodorran, pterrax, razorwing, and snake (Huge viper).

Summon Nature's Ally V: Available creatures are inix and snake (giant constrictor).

Summon Nature's Ally VI: Available creatures are cilops; crodlu, heavy; and elemental, Large (any).

Summon Nature's Ally VII: Available creatures are elemental, Huge (any); mastyrial; and mekillot.

Summon Nature's Ally VIII: Available creatures are elemental, greater (any) and roc.

Summon Nature's Ally IX: Available creatures are elemental, elder (any).

UNCOMMON ATHASIAN LANGUAGES

Language	Typical User
Ancient Halfling (dead language)	Historical texts, psionic lore
Draconic	Dragon-kings, arcane texts
Draxa (dead language)	Historical texts
Psurlonese	Psurlons
Yuan-ti	Yuan-ti

THE ERUDITE

Scholar-Thieves of Thought

by Bruce Cordell · illustrated by Dave McClean

The *Expanded Psionics Handbook* introduces four base classes for psionic characters: the psion, psychic warrior, soulblade, and wilder. However, there are other paths to psionic power, and one is the erudite.

The erudite is a psionic character who follows a scholarly and reflective road to power instead of a merely self-conscious path, like the psion. An erudite's psionic powers arise from a schedule of austere study and continual practice. Those who can master the teachings of erudite lore can eventually call upon an internal reservoir of psionic power.

Adventures: An erudite adventures to exercise his mastery of mental powers and the desire to discover new troves of psionic lore. Erudites might also have any of the noble or ignoble motivations that other adventurers do.

Characteristics: The erudite's strength is in his array of powers, the products of hard work and prolonged study. As with the psion, an erudite's aggressive powers do not scale by level like the spells of arcane and divine casters (although they can be augmented), but he enjoys supreme flexibility in accessing those powers with power points. Additionally, an erudite can seed a crystal or gem with a fragment of his personality, creating a psicrystal as a class ability.

Unlike a psion, an erudite does not choose a discipline in which to focus (and his ability to learn select discipline powers is somewhat restricted). In addition to the powers he learns for free when gaining a new level, an erudite can learn powers as he comes upon them, which means the erudite's potential variety of powers is far broader than a psion's.

Alignment: The studious erudites are more prone toward law than chaos. Erudites serve both good and evil in equal measure, favoring neither.

Religion: Erudites sometimes worship deities revered for their intelligence and wisdom. They often find comfort and insight communing with deities of knowledge and secrets, but they do not forge the bonds of dedication that more spiritual classes do.

Background: Unlike psions, erudites see themselves as members of a defined group, all of whom seek wellsprings of psionic lore. Moreover, they are more likely to belong to formal organizations of similarly-minded manifesters, where such lore is accumulated and studied in common.

Races: Those who choose the way of the erudite adhere to a rigorous path of study and practice. Among the humanoid races, humans, elves, and gnomes are most apt to follow such a course. Among the savage and monstrous humanoids, erudites are rare, since rigorous study of psionic lore is a requirement.

Other Classes: Erudites enjoy the company of companions with widely varying skills. They prefer to manifest their powers from a protected flank, serving either as artillery or as support to their team.

Role: An erudite's powers make him a good addition to any party. Erudites take on differing roles within a party, based on the powers they decide to manifest on a given day.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

Erudites have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Intelligence determines what powers an erudite can manifest, how many powers he can manifest, and how

hard those powers are to resist. See the Class Features section.

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d4.

CLASS SKILLS

The erudite's class skills (and the key ability for each) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (psionics)* (Int), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Profession (Wis), Psicraft* (Int), and Sense Motive (Wis). *See the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*, Chapter 3: Skills.

Skill Points at 1st Level: (2 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the erudite.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Erudites are proficient with the club, dagger, heavy crossbow, light crossbow, quarterstaff, and shortspear. They are not proficient with any type of armor or shield. Armor does not interfere with the manifestation of powers.

Power Points/Day: An erudite's ability to manifest powers is limited by the power points he has available. His base daily allotment of power points is given on the Erudite class table. In addition, he receives bonus power points per day if he has a high Intelligence score (see Table 2-1: Ability Modifiers and Bonus Power Points in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*). His race might also provide bonus power points per day, as might certain feats and items.

Powers Discovered (Repertoire): An erudite learns his powers from the same power list that psions and wilders use. The erudite begins play knowing three 1st-level psion/wilder powers of your choice. For each point of Intelligence bonus he possesses, he knows one additional 1st-level power when play begins. Each time the erudite achieves a new level, he unlocks the knowledge of two new powers of any level or levels that he can manifest (according to his new level) from the psion/wilder power list.

An erudite may not automatically learn powers from any of the discipline exclusive lists. However, he can later learn such powers through other means; see Learning Discipline Powers.

To learn or manifest a power, an erudite must have an Intelligence score of at least 10 + the power's level. An erudite's bonus power points are based on Intelligence (see Table 2-1: Ability Modifiers and Bonus Powers in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*). The Difficulty Class for saving throws against erudite powers is 10 + the power's level + the Intelligence modifier. The erudite may learn new powers found in power stones, from the minds of other willing psionic characters, and from the minds of unconscious psionic characters (see Adding Powers to an Erudite's Repertoire).

Unique Powers Per Day: An erudite manifests psionic powers, paying for each manifestation with an

expenditure of power points. Unlike a psion, an erudite is limited to manifesting a certain number of unique psionic powers of each power level per day from the repertoire of powers he knows, according to his class level. Thus, a 1st level erudite can manifest 1 unique power per day; however, the total number of powers an erudite may manifest per day is limited only by the number of his daily power points (that is, the erudite could manifest the unique power as many times per day as he has power points to pay for it). An erudite simply knows his powers (they are part of his repertoire). He does not need to prepare them, though he must get a good night's sleep each day to regain all spent power points.

For instance, Aemund the 1st-level erudite (who has taken the Extra Unique Power feat presented below) has in his repertoire four different 1st level powers: *crystal shard, empty mind, psionic daze,* and *synesthete.* On any given day, he may manifest up to two of those powers (if he hadn't taken the Extra Unique Power feat, he would only be able to manifest one power per day from all the powers he knows). He doesn't have to decide ahead of time which two powers he'll manifest. At 1st level, he has 5 power points (2 class base + 1 bonus power point for high Intelligence + 2 for Psionic Talent feat) so he could manifest *crystal shard,* for 1 power point, a total of five times, without breaking the rule of just two unique 1st level powers per day. In this case, he only manifests one power today; he could have manifested *crystal shard* three times and *psionic daze* two times without breaking the unique power per day rule, too. For the purposes of manifesting unique powers per day, a new day is assumed to start after the erudite rests to regain daily power points. He can manifest a different mix of unique powers each day, as he desires, without preparation.

An erudite does not choose a primary discipline.

Bonus Feats: An erudite gains a bonus feat at 1st level, 5th level, 10th level, 15th level, and 20th level. This feat must be a psionic feat, a metapsionic feat, or a psionic item creation feat.

These bonus feats are in addition to the feats that a character of any class gains every three levels (as given on Table 3-2: Experience and Level-Dependent Benefits, page 22 of the *Player's Handbook*). An erudite is not limited to psionic feats, metapsionic feats, and psionic item creation feats when choosing these other feats.

Psicrystal: An erudite gains the Psicrystal Affinity feat as a class feature (see Chapter 3 of the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*).

ADDING POWERS TO AN ERUDITE'S REPERTOIRE

Erudites can add new powers to their repertoires through several methods, in addition to learning new powers for gaining a level like other psionic classes.

Powers Gained at a New Level: Erudites and other psionic characters perform a certain amount of personal meditation between adventures in an attempt to unlock latent mental abili-

THE ERUDITE

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Power Points/ Day	Unique Powers per Day 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Psicrystal, Bonus Feat	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	+1	+0	+0	+3		6	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	+1	+1	+1	+3		11	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4	+2	+1	+1	+4		17	3	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Bonus feat	25	3	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
6	+3	+2	+2	+5		35	3	3	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
7	+3	+2	+2	+5		46	4	3	2	1	—	—	—	—	—
8	+4	+2	+2	+6		58	4	3	3	2	—	—	—	—	—
9	+4	+3	+3	+6		72	4	4	3	2	1	—	—	—	—
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	Bonus feat	88	4	4	3	3	2	—	—	—	—
11	+5	+3	+3	+7		106	4	4	4	3	2	1	—	—	—
12	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8		126	4	4	4	3	3	2	—	—	—
13	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8		147	4	4	4	4	3	2	1	—	—
14	+7/+2	+4	+4	+9		170	4	4	4	4	3	3	2	—	—
15	+7/+2	+5	+5	+9	Bonus feat	195	4	4	4	4	4	3	2	1	—
16	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10		221	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	2	—
17	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10		250	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	1
18	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11		280	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	2
19	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11		311	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3
20	+10/+5	+6	+6	+12	Bonus feat	343	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

EXTRA UNIQUE POWER [PSIONIC]

If you take this feat, you can manifest one more unique power per day.

Prerequisite: Possess the unique powers per day class ability.

Benefit: Choose a power level from which you can already manifest powers (1st through 9th). From now on, you can manifest one more unique power per day from among the powers you know of this level.

Special: You can take this feat multiple times; however, you can't take it more than once per character level.

ties. Each time an erudite achieves a new level, he learns additional powers according to his class schedule.

An erudite learns two powers of his choice to add to his repertoire in this fashion. These powers represent powers unlocked through study, practice, and the accumulation of psionic lore. The two free powers must be of levels the erudite can manifest. These two free powers can never be from a select discipline list.

Learning Discipline Powers: An erudite can only learn discipline powers by directly learning the power from another's repertoire, learning it from a power stone, or by taking the Expanded Knowledge feat or the Epic Expanded Knowledge feat (see the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*).

An erudite can learn powers whenever he encounters a new power on a power stone, or gains access to another psionic character's or creature's repertoire (these could be any powers from the psion/wilder list, or any select discipline powers encoded in the stone or held in a creature's repertoire). No matter what the power's source, the character must first make contact (a process similar to addressing a power stone, requiring a Psicraft check against a DC of 15 + the highest level power contained in the stone or the repertoire). An erudite can make contact with only a willing psionic character or creature (unconscious creatures are considered willing, but not psionic characters under the effects of other immobilizing conditions).

Mental contact requires 1 full round of physical contact, which can provoke attacks of opportunity. Once contact is achieved, the character becomes aware of all the powers stored in the power stone or all the powers the other character knows up to the highest level of power the contactor knows himself.

Next, the erudite may make a Psicraft check (DC 15 + power's level) to see if he understands one of the powers. If the power is not on his class list or is a discipline power, he automatically fails this check.

If the check fails, the erudite cannot understand, manifest, or learn the power. He cannot attempt to manifest or learn it again, even if he studies it from another source, until he gains another rank in Psicraft. If the power was being learned from a power stone, it does not vanish from the power stone.

If the erudite understands the selected power, he can attempt to manifest the power normally on his next turn, as described in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*, or he may attempt to permanently commit the power to his own repertoire.

Committing Powers to a Repertoire: Once an erudite understands a new power through the described procedure of contact, he can learn it, permanently adding it to his repertoire.

Requirements: The process requires eight hours, regardless of the power's level. During those 8 hours, the erudite must remain in meditation. The erudite doesn't need to keep the power stone or other psionic source nearby while he fixes the candidate power in his repertoire. However, should he manifest any other power during the time requirement, he loses focus on the power to be added, and loses the chance to learn that power until he gains at least one more rank in Psicraft.

XP Cost: To permanently learn a new power that is not one of the powers the erudite learns automatically for going up a level, he must expend 20 XP, which are deducted from the character at the end of the meditation. Now the erudite permanently knows the power, and has it in his repertoire just like any other power he knows.

The erudite does not have to pay the costs in time or XP for the powers he gains for free at each new level. The erudite adds these to his repertoire as part of his ongoing meditation.

Other Considerations: In most cases, psionic characters or creatures charge a fee to erudites for the privilege of learning powers from their repertoires. This fee is usually equal to the power's level times 50 gp, although many jealously guard their higher-level powers and might charge much more (or deny access altogether). Erudites friendly to one another often "trade" access to equal-level powers from each other's repertoires at no cost.

If contacting another psionic character or creature, the process leaves the other character's repertoire unharmed in either case, but a power learned from a power stone disappears from the power stone.

Starting Gear

3d4 x 10 gp of equipment.

Countdown to EBERRON

A World Tempered by Magic

by Mat Smith

EBERRON is more than just a campaign setting filled with magic; it's a world that has been formed by magic. For thousands of years, the spellcasters of the *EBERRON Campaign Setting* have slowly influenced and shaped civilization through the exploration and application of their many and varied talents. As humanoid society developed, the existence of magic allowed a level of innovation and invention that no other science or technology could possibly equal. Magical solutions to many of life's problems, daily tasks, and other less mundane challenges have allowed humanoid societies to thrive across the entirety of EBERRON's surface—particularly on the notably cosmopolitan continent of Khorvaire.

MAGIC IS ALL AROUND

EBERRON is a world where lamps enchanted with *light* spells illuminate important and well-traveled streets. *Whispering wind* and *sending* spells relay urgent messages across great distances. Skycoaches whisk commoners from one end of Sharn to another, deftly maneuvering among the city's soaring towers and sweeping bridges. Passengers and cargo are ferried from Zil'argo to Karrn'ath aboard airships powered by magically bound elementals. Virtually every facet of society is affected in some way by the use of magic, creating a great number of conveniences, along with an understandable amount of reliance. While powerful spells and magic items command prices well beyond most of EBERRON's citizenry, much of the world's low-level magic is relatively commonplace, thanks in no small part to working class spellcasters known as magewrights.

Magewright

Magic suffuses EBERRON and permeates every level of society in Khorvaire. A truly talented blacksmith weaves spells over his forge to help him shape the steel, and a fine tapestry has a glamer on every thread to enhance its appearance. The villages and cities of Khorvaire are full of commoners, experts, and warriors, of course, just like cities elsewhere. The true masters in their craft, however, and the most successful at what they do, are magewrights—minor spellcasters who weave arcane magic into the practice of their trade.

Magewrights are most frequently found in cities and large towns, where they are about as common as adepts. The vast majority of magewrights are members of the guilds run by the dragonmarked houses, particularly House Cannith's Tinkers' Guild and Fabricators' Guild. Unlike adepts, they are unknown among more savage species.

A magewright's extremely limited spell selection makes this class generally unsuitable for player character use.

Hit Die: d4.

Class Skills

The magewright's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Profession (Wis), and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (2 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the magewright NPC class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Magewrights are skilled with all simple weapons. Magewrights are not proficient with any type of armor nor with shields. Armor of any type interferes with a magewright's arcane gestures, which can cause his spells with somatic components to fail.

The true masters in their craft, and most successful at what they do, are magewrights.

Spells: A magewright casts arcane spells. He is limited to a certain number of spells of each spell level per day, according to his class level. Like a wizard, he prepares his spells ahead of time each day. Unlike wizards, magewrights do not keep spellbooks (see Spell Mastery, below) and cannot learn spells they find in spellbooks or on scrolls.

The DC for a saving throw against a magewright's spell is 10 + spell level + the magewright's Intelligence modifier. When the magewright gets 0 spells of a given level, he gets only bonus spells for that spell slot. A magewright without a bonus spell for that level cannot yet cast a spell of that level. Bonus spells are based on Intelligence.

Spell Mastery: A magewright prepares spells as a wizard does, but does not need a spellbook to do so. Rather, a magewright's training emphasizes a small number of spells to such a great extent that he learns to prepare them without referring to a spellbook. A magewright begins play familiar with a number of spells (of any level he can cast) equal to his Intelligence modifier, exactly as though he had taken the Spell Mastery feat. Every time he gains access to a new spell level, and again at 20th level, he learns a number of new spells equal to his current Intelligence modifier.

For example, a 1st-level magewright with an Intelligence of 15 knows 2 spells, and might choose *mending* and *magecraft*. When he reaches 4th level, he increases his Intelligence to 16 and learns 3 more spells: *detect magic*, *unseen servant*, and *make whole*. At 8th level, he increases his Intelligence to 17 (which does not improve his Intelligence modifier) and learns three more spells: *arcane lock*, *explosive runes*, and *glyph of warding*.

Starting Gear

2d4 x 10 gp worth of equipment.

BLESSED WITH OPTIONS

Clerics in the *Eberron Campaign Setting* have many choices to make when determining where their faith truly lies. Some clerics are the champions of one of the many organized churches across Eberron. Others choose to worship an entire pantheon of deities (such as the Sovereign Host or the Dark Six). There are even clerics that have no allegiance to a specific church or deity who draw divine energy directly from the ambient spiritual force that fills the world around them. Whether a cleric serves a church, is devoted to a particular deity, or simply follows the dictates of her own heart, daily prayers are answered with divine power. Interestingly, the gods of the *Eberron Campaign Setting* do not seem to intervene or interfere directly in mortal affairs, causing some to speculate as to whether they actually grant divine spellcasting ability. This spiritual question is particularly intriguing as it is quite clear that even the most corrupt clerics are able to con-

THE MAGEWRIGHT

NPC Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day 0	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Spell Mastery	3	1	—	—	—	—
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3		3	1	—	—	—	—
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3		3	2	—	—	—	—
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Spell Mastery	3	2	0	—	—	—
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4		3	2	1	—	—	—
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5		3	2	1	—	—	—
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5		3	3	2	—	—	—
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	Spell Mastery	3	3	2	0	—	—
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6		3	3	2	1	—	—
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7		3	3	2	1	—	—
11th	+5	+3	+3	+7		3	3	3	2	—	—
12th	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8	Spell Mastery	3	3	3	2	0	—
13th	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8		3	3	3	2	1	—
14th	+7/+2	+4	+4	+9		3	3	3	2	1	—
15th	+7/+2	+5	+5	+9		3	3	3	3	2	—
16th	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	Spell Mastery	3	3	3	3	2	0
17th	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10		3	3	3	3	2	1
18th	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11		3	3	3	3	2	1
19th	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11		3	3	3	3	3	2
20th	+10/+5	+6	+6	+12	Spell Mastery	3	3	3	3	3	2

MAGEWRIGHT SPELL LIST

Magewrights choose their spells from the following list:

0-level: *arcane mark, detect magic, light, mage hand, mending, message, open/close, prestidigitation, read magic.*

1st-level: *alarm, animate rope, comprehend languages, erase, grease, hold portal, identify, magecraft*, mount, Nystul's magic aura, Tenser's floating disk, unseen servant.*

2nd-level: *arcane lock, augury, Leomund's trap, locate object, magic mouth, make whole, misdirection, obscure object, whispering wind.*

3rd-level: *arcane sight, clairaudience/clairvoyance, daylight, dispel magic, explosive runes, gentle repose, glyph of warding, illusory script, nondetection, phantom steed, secret page, sepia snake sigil, tongues.*

4th-level: *animate dead, detect scrying, divination, fire trap, hardening*, illusory wall, imbue with spell ability, locate creature, minor creation, remove curse, scrying, stone shape.*

5th-level: *contact other plane, fabricate, false vision, Leomund's secret chest, major creation, permanency, sending, symbol of pain, symbol of sleep, wall of stone.*

*New spell described in the *Eberron Campaign Setting*, Chapter 5: Magic.

tinue casting spells. Regardless, with an entire world filled with new deities, churches, and societies, the clerics of the *Eberron Campaign Setting* have a wide number of domains from which to choose, including well over a dozen entirely new domains.

SPELLS IN EBERRON

Whether it be the magic item manipulating spells of the artificer and magewright, or divine spells affecting the enigmatic deathless, the *Eberron Campaign Setting* presents kinds of magic never before seen in the D&D game.

Energy Alteration

Transmutation

Level: Art 1
Components: S, M
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Touch
Target: Magic item touched
Duration: 10 min./level
Saving Throw: Will negates (object)
Spell Resistance: Yes (object)

You alter an item that employs an energy type or grants protection from an energy type, to employ or protect against a different energy type. For example, you could change a *+2 flaming battleaxe* to a *+2 frost battleaxe* or a *ring of minor energy resistance (acid)* to a *ring of minor energy resistance (sonic)*. The amount of damage dealt by energy, protection offered from energy, and all other effects remain the same.

Material Component: An alchemical ointment formed from materials representing all five energy types and costing 50 gp.

Hero's Blade

Necromancy

Level: Deathless 9
Components: V, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Melee weapon touched
Duration: 1 min./level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object); see text
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object); see text

You channel the spirit of a mighty elf hero of old into a melee weapon. For the duration of the spell, the weapon gains the following benefits:

- The weapon deals +2d6 points of damage to evil creatures, or +2d8 points of damage to evil outsiders and undead. On a critical hit, the weapon deals +2d10 points of damage to evil creatures or +2d12 points of damage to evil outsiders and undead. (Against undead, the weapon damage is not multiplied on a critical hit, but the undead creature still takes increased damage from this effect. Other creatures immune to critical hits do not take extra damage from this effect.)
- The weapon becomes good-aligned, allowing it to bypass the damage reduction of certain evil creatures.
- The weapon's threat range doubles, as though it were affected by a *keen edge* spell (this does not stack with the keen property or the *keen edge* spell, but it does stack with the Improved Critical feat).
- When it scores a critical hit against an evil foe, the weapon blinds and deafens the opponent for 1d4 rounds (a successful Will save negates the blindness). Spell resistance applies to this effect.
- When it scores a critical hit against an evil extraplanar creature, the creature must make a successful Will save or be instantly banished back to its home plane. A creature so banished cannot return for at least 24 hours. Spell resistance applies to this effect.

NEW EBERRON CLERIC DOMAINS

Two domains of clerical magic unique to Eberron, presented here, deal exclusively with the unliving courtiers and warriors of the Undying Court and the life augmenting magic of the Arawai.

DEATHLESS DOMAIN

Deities: The Undying Court.
Granted Power: Once per day, you can perform a greater rebuking against deathless creatures in place of one of your turn undead attempts. The greater rebuking is like a normal rebuking except that the deathless creatures that would be rebuked are commanded instead.

DEATHLESS DOMAIN SPELLS

1 Detect Undead: Reveals undead or deathless within 60 ft.
2 Consecrate: Fills area with positive energy, making undead weaker and deathless stronger.
3 Halt Deathless: Immobilizes deathless for 1 round/level.
4 Spirit Steed: Channels an ancient spirit into your steed, increasing its speed and granting other benefits.
5 Hallow: Designates location as holy.
6 Create Deathless: Create undying soldier.
7 Control Deathless: Deathless don't attack you while under your command.
8 Create Greater Deathless: Create undying councilor.
9 Hero's Blade: Channel the spirit of a great hero into a melee weapon.

LIFE DOMAIN

Deities: Arawai.
Granted Power: Once per day, you can grant 1d6 temporary hit points +1 per cleric level to a creature you touch. These temporary hit points last for a maximum of 1 hour/level.

LIFE DOMAIN SPELLS

1 Hide From Undead: Undead can't perceive 1 subject/level.
2 Restoration, Lesser: Dispels magical ability penalty or repairs 1d4 ability damage.
3 Plant Growth: Grows vegetation, improves crops.
4 Death Ward: Grants immunity to death spells and negative energy effects.
5 Disrupting Weapon: Melee weapon destroys undead.
6 Animate Objects: Objects attack your foes.
7 Regenerate: Subject's severed limbs grow back, cures 4d8 damage + 1/level (maximum +35).
8 Animate Plants: One or more trees animate and fight for you.
9 Heal, Mass: As heal, but with several subjects.

Spellcasters of Eberron have slowly influenced society through the application of their talents.

Magecraft
Divination
Level: Sor/Wiz 1
Components: V, F
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 day

You get a +5 competence bonus on one Craft check representing a day of work crafting an item. If you have the capability of casting this spell every day, you can make a Craft check representing a week's work and still gain the +5 competence bonus.

Focus: The tools and other equipment normally required to use the Craft skill you apply the bonus to.

Nature's Wrath
Evocation
Level: Drd 4 (Gatekeeper)
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Area: Unnatural creatures in a 20-ft.-radius burst
Duration: Instantaneous (1 round); see text
Saving Throw: Will partial; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

You call up the power of nature to smite your enemies. Creatures that are a part of the natural world are unaffected; aberrations, undead, and similar corruptions of nature are harmed by the spell.

The spell deals damage to creatures within its area based on their creature type. Animals, elementals, fey, outsiders with elemental subtypes (air, earth, fire, or water), oozes, plants, and vermin are unharmed by the spell. Constructs and inanimate objects also take no damage.

Aberrations take 1d6 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d6) and are dazed for 1 round. A successful Will saving throw reduces the damage to half and negates the daze effect.

Creatures of other types (dragons, giants, humanoids, magical beasts, monstrous humanoids, and nonelemental outsiders) take 1d8 points of damage per two caster levels (maximum 5d8). A successful Will save reduces the damage to half.

Power Surge
Transmutation
Level: Art 3
Components: S, XP
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Wand or staff touched
Duration: 1 min./level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

Touching a wand or staff that has at least one charge, you imbue it with one temporary charge per 5 caster levels. These charges work like temporary hit points: When a character uses the item, deduct the charges spent from the temporary charges first. When the power surge expires, any remaining temporary charges are lost.

XP Cost: 5 XP times the level of the highest-level spell stored in the item.

LIVING SPELLS

During the course of the Last War, particularly in the region that became known as the Mournland, a phenomenal amount of magical energy was unleashed. Amid the devastation and chaos caused by that unchecked magical warfare, spell effects occasionally lingered well beyond their natural duration and, for reasons unknown, became sentient. These bizarre "living spells" refused to dissipate and continued to maim and kill indiscriminately. Writhing with magical energy and moving with malevolent purpose, a wide array of living spells continue to haunt the Mournland and other areas afflicted by the Last War.

"Living spell" is an entirely new and highly unusual template from the *Eberron Campaign Setting* that is applied to any arcane or divine spell effect, rather than to a creature. The living spell template may be applied to any spell that creates an area or effect, including those with instantaneous effects, but not one that is targeted or creates a creature (such as a *summon monster* spell). The characteristics of each living spell are determined by the individual nature of the spell, including its caster level. The following is just one example of a living spell created from a *cloudkill* cast by a 10th-level arcane spellcaster.

CREATING NEW SPELLS FOR A NEW WORLD

"I thought it might be neat to talk a little bit about the raison d'être for many of the new spells in the *Eberron Campaign Setting*. One theme is the idea of having construct PCs and constructs in general playing a significant role in the world. That led to the creation of spells such as *total repair* (the warforged's *heal*) and *disable construct* (how to *harm* a golem). The *repair damage* spells from *Tome & Blood* reappear here for the same reason, and they are joined by new *inflict damage* spells.

"A similar theme has to do with the inclusion of the deathless monster type in the book, which was introduced in *Book of Exalted Deeds*. Because the deathless are important to the elves of Aerenal, we included spells similar to the many spells to create or control undead, but targeting deathless creatures instead. *Control deathless* and *halt deathless* are examples.

"Third is the unique role we've carved out for the druid in Eberron. The *Player's Handbook* mentions that druids hate aberrations; we've taken that hatred and forged it into weapons druids can use to crush these abominations against nature. Long ago, the druids originated as Eberron's defenders against an invading force of extraplanar aberrations, and spells such as *detect aberration*, *nature's wrath*, *return to nature*, and *zone of natural purity* date from that ancient time.

"Finally, the artificer demanded a host of new augmentations keyed to his particular role as a maker of magic things. The weapon augmentation and armor enhancement spells, such as *power surge*, *item alteration*, and *blades of fire*, were created for that purpose."

—James Wyatt

Living Cloudkill
Large Ooze

Hit Dice: 10d10+20 (75 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)
Armor Class: 15 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 deflection), touch 15, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+13
Attack: Slam +8 melee (1d6+3 plus poison)
Full Attack: Slam +8 melee (1d6+3 plus poison)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Engulf, poison
Special Qualities: Damage reduction 10/magic, ooze traits, spell resistance 20
Saves: Fort +10, Ref +9, Will +9
Abilities: Str 15, Dex 12, Con 15, Int –, Wis 12, Cha 15
Skills: –
Feats: –
Environment: Any land
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 11-12 HD (Large); 13-20 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

A thick, green fog hangs low on the ground, almost seeming to reach hungrily toward you.

Combat

A living cloudkill moves swiftly into battle, attempting to engulf any living thing it encounters and letting its cloudkill ability slowly poison victims to death. It saves it slam attacks to trip or otherwise cripple creatures that attempt to flee, allowing it to envelop its prey at its leisure.

Cloudkill (Su): A creature hit by a living cloudkill's slam attack or engulfed by it is poisoned as by the *cloudkill* spell. A living creature with 3 or fewer HD is automatically killed (no save), a creature with 4 to 6 HD is slain unless it succeeds on a DC 17 Fortitude save (in which case it takes 1d4 points of Constitution damage), and a living creature with 6 or more HD takes 1d4 points of Constitution damage (Fortitude DC 17 half). This damage applies when the creature is struck by a slam attack or each round it remains engulfed by the living cloudkill.

Engulf (Ex): A living cloudkill can flow around creatures that fit within its space as a standard action. It cannot make a slam attack during a round in which it engulfs. The living spell merely has to move over the opponents, affecting as many as it can cover. Opponents can make attempt attacks of opportunity against the living spell, but if they do so, they are not entitled to a saving throw. Those who do not attempt opportunity attacks must succeed on a DC 17 Reflex save or be engulfed; on a success, they are pushed back or aside (opponent's choice) as the spell moves forward. Engulfed creatures are subject to the full normal effect of the cloudkill spell (see above) each round on the living spell's turn, and they are considered to be grappled.

Ooze Traits: An ooze is blind (blindsight 60 ft.) and immune to gaze attacks, visual effects, illusions, and other attack forms that rely on sight. It is immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, magic sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, and polymorphing. It is not subject to critical hits and flanking.

CREATING A WORLD CREATED BY MAGIC

"At the very beginning, EBERRON was inspired by a simple question: If arcane magic is a reliable force that behaves in a predictable manner, wouldn't it eventually be incorporated into society? Why would people develop technology when they already had access to a source of wonders—and what effect would the use of magic have on warfare, communication, transportation, and other elements of daily life? What about psionics—why would you study and develop psionics if you already possessed arcane magic, and what impact would the different disciplines have on society? With both psionics and arcane magic, the goal was to create societies where these forces have had a logical impact on the world.

"Hearing this, many people assume that EBERRON is a mirror of modern-day earth—that everyone has a *crystal ball* cell phone, an assault rifle of *magic missiles*, or a Mercedes *flying carpet*. Nothing could be further from the truth. The goal all along was to keep the unique flavor of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: to make sure that the world would feel comfortable and familiar, and that the innovations would make sense. It's not a world in which everyone is a wizard, and it's not a world in which every citizen is bristling with artifacts. Magic items cost just as much as before, and while a city, church, or noble family might have magic items that can be used by the public, the typical peasant could save his whole life and never be able to afford a *wand of sleep*. True wizards are rare individuals who possess a greater understanding of magic than most people can ever attain. There is an NPC class, the magewright, which focuses on the limited use of the magic that is most useful in daily life. The average innkeeper has little use for *enlarge*—but *prestidigitation* is a valuable tool for keeping the inn clean, the drinks cold, and spicing up bland food.

"As the setting evolved, this idea was taken a step farther. Instead of relying completely on arcane spellcasters, magic became an integral part of the world itself. In a world in which a displacer beast could be the product of natural (well, supernatural) evolution, what else might develop? What if there were humanoids with the same sort of innate magical gifts (that is, dragonmarks) and how would this affect the economy and politics of the world? This has become a key element of the setting, and we'll reveal a few of the details next month!"

—Keith Baker

The exciting, new *EBERRON Campaign Setting* hits the shelves of your favorite bookstore or hobby shop next month. At the same time, in *DRAGON* #320, we'll give you one more look at what you can expect to see inside.

You'll finally get to find out a little about the mysterious dragonmarks and the various abilities they confer to certain members of the powerful dragonmarked houses. You'll also get to dig up some information about the different types of dragonshards, where they come from, and what they do.

GREYHAWK FEATS

More Regional Feats of Oerth

by Erik Mona • illustrated by Kalman Andrasofszky

Because the World of Greyhawk is the default setting for Dungeons & Dragons, it's sometimes tempting to limit Greyhawk characters to the options presented in the *Player's Handbook* alone. Since the publication of the *Living Greyhawk Gazetteer*, however, the game has grown to include a number of options that can help bring characters to life by allowing them to take a few steps away from the core rules. Enter regional feats, special feats flavored to specific geographic regions or subraces. Regional feats drive home cultural differences between characters from different regions and create cultural bonds between characters from the same nation or race.

Dragon #315 featured thirty-eight Greyhawk-specific regional feats. The twenty-two feats presented here complete the circle, presenting viable regional feat options for characters of every player character race or Flanaess nation. Regional feats are often more specialized and more powerful than the standard feats in the *Player's Handbook*. This rewards players for grounding their characters in the setting. If you plan on using these feats without regional requirements, think about diminishing their powers slightly.

REGIONAL FEATS EXPLAINED

Characters may select regional feats appropriate to the region in which they begin play, as outlined on the Character Regions table. Characters also may select regional feats associated with their race, but characters can select racial feats associated with one race only. A human with Suel and Olman blood must choose which racial strain is dominant, and cannot thereafter select feats from the non-dominant racial strain.

As characters travel, they may learn regional feats from new geographic regions. After 1st level, every 2 ranks in Knowledge (local) allow you to select feats from another region. Racial feats cannot be gained in this manner.

Feats that appear in *Dragon* #315 have been marked with an asterisk (*) in the Character Regions chart.

FEATS OF THE WORLD OF GREYHAWK

These new feats have a special prerequisite: the appropriate character region, as previously explained. Some of the feats described below are designated as [Fighter, General]. This means a fighter can use his bonus feat to acquire one of those feats. However, the character still must qualify for that region in order to take the feat.

Deepseer [General]
You see exceptionally well underground.
Regions: Deep gnome, stout halfling, mountain dwarf.
Benefit: You gain darkvision with a range of 30 feet. If you already have darkvision, add 30 feet to your darkvision range.

Desert Fighter [Fighter, General]
You know how to make the most of terrain-inspired advantages when fighting in a desert.
Region: Bright Lands.
Benefit: When fighting in desert terrain, you gain a +2 dodge bonus to AC.

Elemental Focus [General]
The Baklunish folk have always enjoyed a close relationship with the elements, and your skill with elemental spells continues a tradition that dates back hundreds of years before the Invoked Devastation.
Region: Baklunish.
Benefit: Add +1 to the Difficulty Class of all saving throws against spells you cast with the air, earth, fire, or water descriptors. This bonus stacks with the similar bonuses granted by the Spell Focus and Greater Spell Focus feats.

Exercises of Arnd [Fighter, General]
You follow the teachings of the legendary ancient Oeridian general-priest Arnd of Tdon, practicing a rigidly defined set of physical exercises every day to maintain peak fighting effectiveness.
Prerequisite: Toughness.
Regions: Furyondy, Nyrond, Oeridian, Ratik.
Benefit: You practice a daily regimen of exercises that

CHARACTER REGIONS

Race/Region	Feat
Ahlissa	Badge of Bondage*, Celestial Scion*, Rustic Charm, Well Read*, World Weary
Baklunish	Elemental Focus, Horselore*, Jinnbond, Tongue of Mouqol*
Bandit Kingdoms	Badge of Bondage*, Blooded*, Jungle Fighter*, Orc Blooded*, Rapscallion*, World Weary
Bissel	Blooded*, Border Watch*, Mercantile Background*, Mercenary Background*, Tongue of Mouqol*
Blackmoor	Blackmoorian Rhymes*, Expert Dungeoneer*, Lays of the Northern Adepts*, Wastri's Blessing*
Bone March	Blooded*, Landless Nobility*, Orc Blooded*, Raider's Spirit*, World Weary
Bright Lands	Blooded*, Desert Fighter, Lore of the Ur-Flan*, Vathrin Stigmata
Celene	Companion Guard Style*, Ehlonna's Way*, Faerie Mysteries Initiate, Well Read*
Dwarf, hill	Dwarflore*, Expert Dungeoneer*, Mercantile Background*, Mercenary Background*, Mountain Fighter*
Dwarf, mountain	Deepseer, Dwarflore*, Expert Dungeoneer*, Mercantile Background*, Mountain Fighter*
Dyvers	Mercantile Background*, Rapscallion*, Rhennlore*, Well Read*
Ekbir	Great Fervor*, Mercantile Background*, Spirit of the Sea, Well Read*
Elf, gray	Companion Guard Style*, Elflore*, Faerie Mysteries Initiate, Tested, Well Read*
Elf, high	Ehlonna's Way*, Elflore*, Faerie Mysteries Initiate, Tested, Well Read*
Elf, valley	Elflore*, Defensive Expert*, Gnomelore*, Mountain Fighter*
Elf, wild	Driftwalker*, Ehlonna's Way*, Faerie Mysteries Initiate, Tested
Elf, wood	Driftwalker*, Ehlonna's Way*, Faerie Mysteries Initiate, Tested
Flan	Badge of Bondage*, Horselore*, Lays of the Northern Adepts*, Lore of the Ur-Flan*
Frost Barbarians	Driftwalker*, Mountain Fighter*, Raider's Spirit*, Troll Blooded, Vatun's Touch
Furyondy	Blooded*, Border Watch*, Exercises of Arnd, Noble Soul*, Rustic Charm, Well Read*
Geoff	Blooded*, Border Watch*, Giantkiller*, Landless Nobility*, Mountain Fighter*, World Weary
Gnome, deep	Deepseer, Expert Dungeoneer*, Mercantile Background*, Noble Soul*
Gnome, rock	Gnomelore*, Mercantile Background*, Rapscallion*, Rustic Charm
Gran March	Blooded*, Border Watch*, Born Follower*, Mercantile Background*
Greyhawk	Expert Dungeoneer*, Fiendsign*, Greyhawk Method*, Mercantile Background*, Rhennlore*, Well Read*, Zagyg's Favor
Half-elf	Elflore*, Noble Soul*, Rapscallion*, Well Traveled
Half-orc	Badge of Bondage*, Mercenary Background*, Raider's Spirit*, Rapscallion*
Halfling, lightfoot	Halfling Lore*, Mercantile Background*, Noble Soul*, Well Traveled
Halfling, stout	Deepseer, Halfling Lore*, Mercantile Background*, Well Traveled
Halfling, tallfellow	Elflore*, Faerie Mysteries Initiate, Halfling Lore*, Well Traveled
Highfolk	Border Watch*, Ehlonna's Way*, Elflore*, Mercantile Background*
Ice Barbarians	Driftwalker*, Mountain Fighter*, Raider's Spirit*, Troll Blooded, Vatun's Touch
Irongate	Border Watch*, Defensive Expert*, Dwarflore*, Mercantile Background*, Mountain Fighter*, Well Read*
Iuz	Blooded*, Fiendsign*, Orc Blooded*, Raider's Spirit*, World Weary
Keoland	Giantkiller*, Rustic Charm, Silent Method, Wastri's Blessing*, Well Read*
Ket	Badge of Bondage*, Blooded*, Border Watch*, Mercantile Background*, Tongue of Mouqol*
Lendore Isles	Elflore*, Faerie Mysteries Initiate, Spirit of the Sea, Well Read*

grant you special bonuses in combat. You choose which bonus you'd prefer before conducting your exercise, modifying your regimen slightly to achieve the desired effect. Granted effects last until the next time you perform the exercises of Arnd.

Conducting exercises of Arnd require 8 hours of rest to clear the mind. You do not have to slumber for every minute of this time, but you must refrain from movement, combat, spellcasting, skill use, conversation, or any other fairly demanding physical or mental task during the rest period. If your rest is interrupted, each interruption adds 1 hour to the total amount of time you must rest in order to clear your mind, and you must have at least 1 hour of uninterrupted rest immediately prior to conducting the exercises of Arnd. If you do not need to sleep for some reason, you still must have 8 hours of restful calm before conducting the exercises.

Rite of Battle: You get a +1 morale bonus on melee attack rolls with a specific weapon you incorporate into your exercise.

Rite of Calm: You get a +1 resistance bonus on all saving throws.

Rite of Fitness: You gain +6 temporary hit points.

Faerie Mysteries Initiate [General]
You know the timeless secrets and rituals of the Faerie Mysteries, self-improving rites of grace and passion that have been handed down since the earliest days that form a fundamental pillar of elven culture.

Regions: Celene, gray elf, high elf, Lendore Isles, tallfellow halfling, Verbobonc, wild elf, wood elf.

Benefits: You and a partner with the Faerie Mysteries Initiate feat practice a 15-minute regimen of cultural rituals that grant you special bonuses on skill checks or combat rolls. You choose which bonus you'd prefer before conducting the exercise, modifying your regimen slightly to achieve the desired effect. Both practitioners must agree upon the rite to be performed and receive the same bonus. Granted effects last until the next time you perform the Faerie Mysteries.

CHARACTER REGIONS

Lordship of the Isles	Badge of Bondage*, Jungle Fighter*, Mercantile Background*, Spirit of the Sea, Well Read*
North Kingdom	Badge of Bondage*, Celestial Scion*, Fiendsign*, Orc Blooded*, World Weary
Nyrond	Blooded*, Border Watch*, Exercises of Arnd, Rustic Charm, Sagacious Method, Well Read*
Oeridian	Blooded*, Born Follower*, Exercises of Arnd, Noble Soul*
Olman	Atlan's Mark*, Badge of Bondage*, Jungle Fighter*, Raider's Spirit*
Onnwal	Badge of Bondage*, Blooded*, Mercantile Background*, World Weary
Pale	Born Follower*, Great Fervor*, Noble Soul*, Troll Blooded
Paynims	Bareback Soul*, Blooded*, Horselore*, Mercenary Background*, Raider's Spirit*
Perrenland	Driftwalker*, Fiendsign*, Mercenary Background*, Mountain Fighter*
Pomarj	Badge of Bondage*, Blooded*, Mountain Fighter*, Orc Blooded*, Raider's Spirit*, World Weary
Ratik	Border Watch*, Exercises of Arnd, Mountain Fighter*, Vatun's Touch
Rhennee	Rapscallion*, Rhennlore*, Second Sight, Well Traveled
Rovers of the Barrens	Bareback Soul*, Blooded*, Horselore*, Raider's Spirit*, World Weary
Scarlet Brotherhood	Badge of Bondage*, Blooded*, Great Fervor*, Jungle Fighter*, Spirit of the Sea, World Weary
Sea Barons	Badge of Bondage*, Mercantile Background*, Rapscallion*, Spirit of the Sea
Sea Princes	Badge of Bondage*, Blooded*, Jungle Fighter*, Landless Nobility*, Spirit of the Sea, Wastri's Blessing*, World Weary
Shield Lands	Blooded*, Border Watch*, Defensive Expert*, Noble Soul*, World Weary
Snow Barbarians	Driftwalker*, Mountain Fighter*, Raider's Spirit*, Troll Blooded, Vatun's Touch
Solnor Compact	Celestial Scion*, Fiendsign*, Mercantile Background*, Nexus Method, Well Read*
Sterich	Blooded*, Border Watch*, Fiendsign*, Giantkiller*, Landless Nobility*, Mountain Fighter*, World Weary
Stonehold	Blooded*, Driftwalker*, Mercenary Background*, Mountain Fighter*, Orc Blooded*, Raider's Spirit*, Vatun's Touch
Suel	Blood of Kord*, Heir of Lendore, Pureblooded Suel, Well Read*
Sunndi	Border Watch*, Defensive Expert*, Elflore*, Rustic Charm, Wastri's Blessing*
Tenh	Blooded*, Landless Nobility*, Mercenary Background*, World Weary
Tiger Nomads	Badge of Bondage*, Bareback Soul*, Horselore*, Raider's Spirit*
Tusmit	Great Fervor*, Mercantile Background*, Mercenary Background*, Mountain Fighter*
Ulek States	Dwarflore*, Elflore*, Gnomelore*, Halfling Lore*, Landless Nobility* (Principality only), Mercantile Background*, Mountain Fighter*, Noble Soul*
Ull	Bareback Soul*, Fiendsign*, Mercenary Background*, Mountain Fighter*, Orc Blooded*, Raider's Spirit*
Urnst States	Mercantile Background*, Mountain Fighter* (Duchy only), Rapscallion* (County only), Rustic Charm, Well Read*
Valley of the Mage	Defensive Expert*, Mountain Fighter*, Shadowbound, Well Read*
Veluna	Great Fervor*, Noble Soul*, Rustic Charm, Well Read*
Verbobonc	Great Fervor*, Elflore*, Faerie Mysteries Initiate, Mercantile Background*, Well Read*
Wild Coast	Badge of Bondage*, Blooded*, Rapscallion*, Spirit of the Sea
Wolf Nomads	Bareback Soul*, Blooded*, Horselore*, Raider's Spirit*
Yeomanry	Badge of Bondage*, Blooded*, Defensive Expert*, Mountain Fighter*, Noble Soul*
Zeif	Badge of Bondage*, Orc Blooded*, Spirit of the Sea, Well Read*

The Faerie Mysteries require 4 hours of "trance" to clear the mind. If your rest is interrupted, each interruption adds 1 hour to the total amount of time you must trance in order to clear your mind, and you must have at least 1 hour of uninterrupted rest immediately prior to conducting the Faerie Mysteries. If you do not need to trance for some reason, you still must have 4 hours of restful calm before conducting the Mysteries.

Carols: You and your partner sing in beautiful harmony of the triumph of Corellon Larethian over Gruumsh One-Eye, extolling the virtues of elves and enumerating the evils of orcs and goblins. When fighting orcs or goblins, you gain a +1 competence bonus on damage rolls with melee attacks and with ranged attacks at ranges of up to 30 feet, and you act as if you had the Improved Critical feat for the weapon you are using. This benefit does not stack with the Improved Critical feat or other effects that increase critical threat range.

Frolics: You and your partner engage in a carefree, joyful gambol featuring hand claps and energetic kicks. At the end of the ceremony, both partners receive a +4 insight bonus on Perform (dance) and Tumble checks.

Gyres: You join your partner in a delicate, deliberate dance involving clasped hands and a rigidly timed orbit around a living flower. You gain a +1 resistance bonus on all saving throws.

Passions: You and your partner engage in an exuberant sensual act. The ritual leaves both partners invigorated, allowing you to use your Intelligence modifier instead of your Constitution modifier to determine bonus hit points.

Heir of Lendore [General]

You are a descendant of the legendary migrations-era Suel archmage Lendore, predictor of the Invoked Devastation, patron of the Lendore Isles, and creator of the City of Glass. Your eyes are milky white and bear no pupils, although you see normally.

Region: Suel.

Benefit: Add +2 to the Difficulty Class for all saving throws against divination spells you cast. This bonus stacks with

those granted by the Spell Focus and Greater Spell Focus feats.

Jinnbond [General]
You are descended from the genies summoned to Oerth by the ancient Baklunish in the dying days of the Suel-Baklunish wars. You might bear some physical or psychological mark of your ancestry, such as a fiery disposition thanks to an efreeti ancestor or uniformly blue eyes from the blood of a marid.

Region: Baklunish.

Benefit: Select one type of genie: dao (earth), djinni (air), efreeti (fire), or marid (water). The benefits of this feat vary by the type of your genie ancestor.

Dao: You receive a +4 bonus on saving throws against earth effects and Fortitude saves made to resist petrification. You also add +2 to the DC of saving throws for any spell with the earth descriptor that you cast as a sorcerer. This benefit stacks with the Spell Focus and Greater Spell Focus feats if the spell you cast is from your chosen school.

Djinni: You receive a +4 bonus on saving throws against air effects and the following spells: *acid fog, call lightning, cloudkill, stinking cloud,* and *storm of vengeance.* You also add +2 to the DC of saving throws for any spells with the air descriptor that you cast as a sorcerer. This benefit stacks with the Spell Focus and Greater Spell Focus feats if the spell you cast is from your chosen school.

Efreeti: You receive a +4 bonus on saving throws against fire effects. You also add +2 to the DC of saving throws for any spells with the fire descriptor that you cast as a sorcerer. This benefit stacks with the Spell Focus and Greater Spell Focus feats if the spell you cast is from your chosen school.

Marid: You receive a +4 bonus on saving throws against water effects and the following spells: *acid fog, cone of cold, horrid wilting, ice storm,* and *sleet storm.* You receive a +2 bonus on Constitution checks made to resist drowning. You also add +2 to the DC of saving throws for any spells with the water descriptor that you cast as a sorcerer. This benefit stacks with the Spell Focus and Greater Spell Focus feats if the spell you cast is from your chosen school.

Special: You may only take this feat as a 1st-level character.

Nexus Method [General]
You learned magic at the Sorcerers' Nexus of Rel Astra, a shadowy academy led by the greatest summoners and binders of Oerth.

Prerequisite: Ability to prepare and cast arcane spells.

Region: Solnor Compact.

Benefit: You can channel stored spell energy into *summon monster* spells that you did not prepare ahead of time. You can "lose" any prepared spell that's not a conjuration spell in order to cast a *summon monster* spell of the same level or lower. For example, a wizard who has prepared *fireball* (a 3rd-level spell) may lose *fireball* in order to cast *summon monster III* (also a 3rd-level spell). Add the following to the list of feats you may select as a bonus wizard feat: Augment Summoning, Fiendsign, Greater Spell Focus, Greater Spell Penetration, Spell Focus, Spell Penetration.

Pureblooded Suel [General]
Undiluted Suloise blood flows through your veins, hearkening back to ancient empires and making you an attractive potential associate to pro-Suel Scarlet Brotherhood racists.

Region: Suel.

Benefit: Your notoriously short temper grants you a +1 bonus on Intimidate checks, while the resolve and magical aptitude of your ancestors grants you a +1 bonus on all saving throws against spells and spell-like effects. You also receive a +2 bonus on Charisma-based skill checks made against members of the Scarlet Brotherhood.

Special: You may select this feat only at 1st level.

Rustic Charm [General]
Others tend to underestimate you due to your rural upbringing.

Regions: Ahlissa, Furyondy, Keoland, Nyrond, rock gnome, Sunndi, Urnst States, Veluna.

Benefit: You suffer no penalties on Diplomacy checks related to social class. Upper class NPCs tend to view you as a charming rube—no threat to them whatsoever. Others suffer a -2 penalty on Sense Motive checks made against you.

Sagacious Method [General]
You learned magic from the Sagacious Society of Nyrond, a loosely organized assembly of scholars, sages, and mages who trade arcane information in an effort to improve the defensive strength of the Kingdom of Nyrond.

Prerequisite: Ability to prepare and cast arcane spells.

Region: Nyrond.

Benefit: You receive a +4 bonus on Spellcraft checks to decipher the writing on scrolls. You also receive a +4 bonus on caster level checks to successfully cast a scroll spell with a caster level higher than your level. Add the following to the list of feats you may select as a bonus wizard feat: Eschew Materials, Greater Spell Focus, Greater Spell Penetration, Magical Aptitude, Spell Focus, Spell Penetration.

Second Sight [General]
You have the ancient gift of foresight, making you an honored member of your bargefolk family.

Region: Rhennee.

Benefit: Once per day, you can cast *augury* as a 3rd-level cleric. This is a spell-like ability.

Shadowbound [General]
The Black One of the Valley of the Mage cast a powerful spell upon you, fusing your soul with a fragment of the Plane of Shadow.

Region: Valley of the Mage.

Benefit: You can cloak yourself in an umbra of shadowstuff, granting you a +2 bonus on Hide checks. Once per day you may cast a spell with the shadow descriptor as though it was prepared with the Empower Spell feat without requiring a higher-level spell slot.

Silent Method [General]
You learned magic at the Lonely Tower of the Silent Ones of Keoland, a secretive order that seeks to protect the last vestiges of ancient Suel magic and ensure that such magic does not fall into the hands of those who would abuse it.

Region: Keoland.

Benefit: You get a +2 bonus on all dispel checks and on caster level checks (1d20 + caster level) made for the *break enchantment* spell. Add the following to the list of feats you may select as a bonus wizard feat: Combat Casting, Greater Spell Focus, Greater Spell Penetration, Magical Aptitude, Spell Focus, Spell Penetration.

Spirit of the Sea [General]
You're most alive on the deck of a ship

at sea and know all too well the dangers of open waters.

Regions: Ekbir, Lendore Isles, Lordship of the Isles, Scarlet Brotherhood, Sea Barons, Sea Princes, Wild Coast, Zeif.

Benefit: You get a +8 bonus on all Survival checks made while aboard a boat or ship.

Tested [General]

You've passed through the Moonarch of Sehanine, been tested by the gods, and have emerged with great insight. The process has granted you intense inner calm, but it has instilled in you an aloofness many find off-putting. You and other People of the Testing share a desire to protect old forest lands, faerie folk, and areas secret and precious to elves. You strive to keep hidden evil banes, magic, and secrets. You see the world as it is meant to be seen, you know the things that were meant to be known, and your destiny is forevermore intertwined with that of the elven race.

Prerequisites: Faerie Mysteries Initiate, character level 10th.

Regions: Gray elf, high elf, wild elf, wood elf.

Benefits: You receive a +2 bonus on Charisma-based skill checks made against elves. This bonus increases to +4 on checks made against other elves with the Tested feat. Additionally, your ordeal in the Moonarch of Sehanine has granted you one of the following powers (choose when you select this feat).

Gift of Prophesy: The elven deities encountered during your Moonarch trial took an especial liking to you and have granted you the ability to communicate with their agents during your nightly trance. Once per day, while in trance, you can cast the *commune* spell as a 10th-level cleric. This is a supernatural ability.

Gift of Sight: Your experience has granted you the ability to pierce magical obfuscation, seeing the world in terms of absolute truth. Once per day, you can cast *true seeing* as a 10th-level cleric. This is a spell-like ability.

Ye'Cind's Ear: Within the mysterious Moonarch, you encountered the elven demigod Ye'Cind, who increased your understanding of traditional elven music. Once per day, you may add a +6 bonus to your effective bard level for purposes of bardic music effects. For example, a 12th-level bard with Ye'Cind's ear and an 18 Charisma could use her bardic music to make a *suggestion*. The DC for the associated save would be 23 (DC 10 + 1/2 bard's level + bard's Cha modifier). The same bard attempting a *song of freedom* would be considered an 18th-level bard for purposes of determining the efficacy of the resulting *break enchantment*. This is a supernatural ability.

Troll Blooded [General]

Your family tree contains the blood of the trolls of the Thillonrian Peninsula.

Prerequisite: Toughness.

Regions: Frost Barbarians, Ice Barbarians, Pale, Snow Barbarians.

Benefit: You gain regeneration 1 as an extraordinary ability. Fire and acid deal normal damage to you. If you lose a limb or a body part, the lost portion regrows in 3d6 days. You can reattach the severed member as a full-round action by holding it to the stump. You are fatigued while exposed to sunlight.

Special: You can take this feat at 1st level only.

Vathrin Stigmata [General]

More than 1,000 years ago, the Flan deity Vathris, patron of the kingdom of Itar, fell in battle against the Kingdom of Sulm, a wickedly barbed, black longspear piercing his chest. You have the ability to manifest a stigmatic wound in your own chest in memory of the deathblow of Vathris, but unlike your patron's poisonous wound, yours has the ability to heal the sick.

Prerequisite: Patron Deity: Vathris.

Region: Bright Lands.

Benefit: Once per day, you can cause your chest to seep a black, tarry substance from a psychosomatic spear wound. If consumed within an hour of collection, this substance has the magical ability to detoxify any poison (as *neutralize poison*) and cure any disease (as *remove disease*). Your wound seeps enough substance for only one application per day. The substance is considered to have a caster level of 5 for purposes of dispel checks. Manifesting the stigmata causes you to become exhausted. This is a supernatural ability.

Vatun's Touch [General]

You have little difficulty with cold environments.

Regions: Frost Barbarians, Ice Barbarians, Ratik, Snow Barbarians, Stonehold.

Benefit: You don't need protection when operating in cold weather and automatically succeed at saves to stave off nonlethal damage. You do not add a cumulative +1 to the DC of checks to resist cold weather effects.

Well Traveled [General]

Your travels across the Flanaess have given you a strong depth of local knowledge and a broad repertoire of far-flung tales.

Regions: Half-elf, lightfoot halfling, Rhennee, stout halfling, tallfellow halfling.

Benefit: You gain 2 ranks in the Knowledge (local) skill and can draw upon your experiences to influence those willing to converse with you. When dealing with a non-hostile creature that you can communicate with, you can use your Knowledge (local) skill in place of your Diplomacy skill.

World Weary [General]

Your crushed spirit makes you difficult to scare or intimidate.

Regions: Ahlissa, Bandit Kingdoms, Bone March, Geoff, Iuz, North Kingdom, Pomarj, Rovers of the Barrens, Scarlet Brotherhood, Sea Princes, Shield Lands, Sterich, Tenh.

Benefit: You receive a +4 competence bonus on saves against fear. Treat fear conditions as one rank lower, so an effect that would make you panicked instead makes you frightened, while an effect that makes you frightened merely leaves you shaken. Effects that make you shaken affect you as normal.

Zagyg's Favor [General]

It's not that you're insane, it's just that "normal" people don't understand the world the way you do. Either way, you're difficult to dominate effectively.

Regions: Greyhawk.

Benefit: You receive a +4 bonus on Will saves against compulsion effects (*confusion, dominate person, insanity,* and so on).

I SCRY

Spying and Divination Magic Items

by Johnathan M. Richards and Matthew Sernett • illustrated by Dave McCllean

The act of scrying often plays an important role in a D&D game. Through various scrying spells and magic items, a spellcaster can spy upon areas and individuals around the world and even on other planes. As PCs gain greater power, it is expected that they will use such divinations to aid them in accomplishing their goals. However, there also exist ways to prevent the success of scrying attempts, from spells such as *false vision* and *screen* to magic items like an *amulet of proof against detection and location*. Just as some fields of magical research strive to make scrying easier, others work equally hard to prevent the success of these efforts.

This article advances both sides of the issue by providing magic items that aid in scrying and also those that prevent its success (or at least punish those who successfully scry upon the item's user). These latter items might be of particular interest to those DMs whose players have gotten into the habit of having their PCs scry on the main enemy and then teleporting over to deal with him, in effect bypassing the bulk of the adventure.

Amulet of Deception

Amulets of deception are used to confuse those who might scry upon their wearers. Each *amulet of deception* is a 1-inch-wide, 2-inch-tall gold locket on a thin chain of golden links. The amulet is often oval- or heart-shaped and opens up to reveal a tiny portrait, such as one might keep of a lover or spouse. However, the image that appears in the locket is also the one that appears in place of the wearer if she is ever scried upon or in the area of a scrying effect while wearing the *amulet of deception*. The amulet also grants the wearer a +2 insight bonus on Intelligence checks to notice a scrying sensor, but it does nothing to prevent the scrying from continuing other than cloak the wearer in the appearance depicted in the amulet. Many who work in the shadows use these devices to prevent their enemies from determining their true appearances.

Faint illusion; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *disguise self*; Price 1,200 gp.

Circlet of Convocation

Some people really don't like being scried upon. For these individuals, the *circlet of convocation* gets the point across. This silver circlet contains five green gems, each sparkling with radiance from within.

The *circlet of convocation* provides a +5 insight bonus on the wearer's Intelligence check to notice a scrying sensor. If the wearer notices a scrying sensor, he may use the *circlet of convocation* as a standard action to instantly appear in a random open square adjacent to the scryer. This travel is a flawless teleportation that can even cross the boundaries of planes. Each time the *circlet of convocation* is used to transport the wearer to a scrier, one of the five gemstones "burns out." In effect, the *circlet of convocation* is a five-charge magic item with each such use expending one charge. If there is no open adjacent square, the teleportation attempt simply fails, and a gem is not burnt out.

Even after all five charges have been used, the circlet continues to provide its +5 insight bonus on detecting scrying sensors.

Using the power of the circlet has its disadvantages. The circlet does not grant any information about the scrier

or guarantee the safety of the environment that is the wearer's destination.

Strong conjuration; CL 13th; Craft Wondrous Item, *detect scrying, greater teleport, planeshift;* Price 4,775 gp.

Deathglance Locket

This small locket is an anti-scrying device not in the sense that it prevents scrying upon the subject, but rather that it is used to punish those who would so intrude upon the subject's privacy. A *deathglance locket* is a 1-inch tiger eye gemstone on a slim golden chain. It is worn about the neck and counts as an amulet in terms of magic items worn. The *deathglance locket* grants its wearer a +2 insight bonus on Intelligence checks to notice scrying sensors. When the wearer notices a scrying sensor, she may call upon the power of the locket to strike back at the scrier. Once per day upon command, the *deathglance locket* traces the scrying sensor's magic back to the scrier's location and sends an immaterial copy of its tiger eye gem hurtling his way. From the scrier's point of view, it's as if the tiger eye gem suddenly flies from the locket and speeds in his direction. The scrier immediately suffers 10d6 points of damage (DC 20 Will save for half) and must make a Concentration check (DC 10 + the damage dealt by the *deathglance locket*) or the scrying effect ends.

Moderate abjuration; CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item, *detect scrying;* Price 3,860 gp.

Golden Beholder

A *golden beholder* is a magic scrying device that shares its form with its monstrous namesake. With all of its pieces collected and in place, the *golden beholder* looks like a 2-foot-diameter sculpture of a beholder made of gold. The large central eye is a sphere of glass set half inside the face of the sculpture, while the eyes on the metal stalks are made of hard clear gemstones of moderate value.

Each of the ten eyestalks can be withdrawn from the beholder, revealing a dagger blade. The *eyestalk daggers* are always of masterwork quality and are worth approximately 450 gp due to their fine craftsmanship and the gemstone "eye" that forms the dagger's pommel. Most *golden beholders* are made by Medium creatures, and thus their eyestalk daggers are made for use by Medium creatures. Each *eyestalk dagger* is imbued with a permanent *Nystul's magic aura* effect that makes it seem nonmagical. *Detect magic* does not detect the aura of an *eyestalk dagger*, but as with *Nystul's magic aura*, an *identify* spell cast on the *eyestalk dagger* allows the caster a DC 10 Will save to recognize magic in the dagger and detect its divination and illusion auras.

When removed from the body, each *eyestalk dagger* functions as a scrying sensor for the golden beholder's central eye. Touching the sheath-hole of a removed *eyestalk dagger* and saying the *golden beholder's* command word sets the central eye's scrying focus to that *eyestalk dagger*. The *golden beholder* user sees and hears with his own visual and auditory acuity from the position of the gemstone that forms the pommel of that *eyestalk dagger*. An impenetrable gray haze hides everything beyond 30 feet from view, although sounds that issue from beyond that distance are still audible if the user could normally hear them from the dagger's position.

Creatures within the area watched by an *eyestalk dagger* do not gain an Intelligence check to sense it as a scrying sensor, but a creature under the effects of a *detect scrying* spell can do so with a successful DC 10 Will save. Creatures within the area viewed by the eyestalk dagger do not gain a Will save to resist being seen and spell resistance does not apply. Anti-scrying spells, such as *mind blank* or *screen* function normally, hiding or disguising the creature or area from the *golden beholder's* user as described by the spell. If the gemstone is removed from the *eyestalk dagger*, or the *eyestalk dagger* is otherwise broken or destroyed, the user of the *golden beholder* cannot use that dagger as a scrying sensor.

The scrying link between the *golden beholder* and its *eyestalk daggers* withstands any distance, even separation across different planes. The scrying effect of an *eyestalk dagger* cannot be dispelled, but a successful targeted *dispel magic* attempt made against an *eyestalk dagger* suppresses that dagger's function for 1d4 rounds. An *antimagic field* also suppresses the *golden beholder's* ability to access an *eyestalk dagger*.

A *golden beholder* user can cast spells through the device as though using the *greater scrying* spell.

Golden beholder owners use the potent item in many different ways. Most commonly, *eyestalk daggers* are given to allies (or allowed to fall into the hands of enemies) so that the user can keep track of other creatures' movements and actions. Other *golden beholder* owners use them as security devices, hiding *eyestalk daggers* in key locations such that they are not easily spotted but have good views of the surrounding terrain.

Strong divination; CL 13th; Craft Wondrous Item, *greater scrying, Nystul's magic aura;* Price 38,000 gp; Weight 100 lb.

Ioun Stone (Black and White Ellipsoid)

This *ioun stone*, an ellipsoid mottled in black and white, provides the equivalent of a *mind blank* spell in regards to scrying. That is, if anyone attempts to scry directly upon a person using this type of *ioun stone*, the attempt automatically fails. If they use a scrying device or spell to scan an area that the person with the *ioun stone* is in, they'll see the area but not the person. The ioun stone does not provide any of the non-scrying benefits of the *mind blank* spell, such as immunity to spells, effects, and devices that otherwise detect, influence, or read emotions or thoughts.

Strong abjuration; CL 15th; Craft Wondrous Item, *mindblank;* Price 60,000 gp.

Mirror of Captured Images

A *mirror of captured images* appears to be a finely wrought silver mirror, typically 3 feet tall by 4 feet wide and held in a frame containing twenty-four embedded gemstones. It has a retractable leg on the back of its frame allowing it to stand upright upon a desktop or dresser, but it is more commonly hung upon a wall at the appropriate height for proper viewing by its owner.

The *mirror of captured images* is slightly different than most scrying devices in that it can be set to begin scrying and then continues to do so automatically until the effect is dispelled or it is commanded to stop. Upon utterance of a command word, the mirror views another place as if with *clairvoyance*, but vision extends even onto other planes provided that the user is

sufficiently familiar with the chosen place. A second command word begins recording the images from the distant location depicted in the mirror's surface, storing these images in the twenty-four gems. Each gem holds one hour's worth of images, so the whole mirror can store up to a full day's images. If left activated for more than 24 hours, the mirror begins "recording over" the oldest images so that only the most recent 24 hours are kept on record. Using the second command word again stops the recording.

If a third command word is uttered while touching one of the gemstones on the frame, the mirror "plays back" the images it has stored within that gem. Finally, a fourth command word uttered while touching a gemstone takes it out of the "continuous recording loop" so that the hour's worth of images can be stored there indefinitely without being "recorded over" in subsequent uses of the mirror. Of course, this lowers the length of time available to the mirror for continuous recording. If at a later time the user wishes to record over the images stored in a gem, repeating the fourth command word while touching the gem in question returns it to the pool of available gemstones for continuous recording.

Mirrors of captured images are often used in magical stakeouts, when someone is expecting a particular item to be stolen and wishes to capture the identity of the thief without remaining in the area himself. They are also occasionally used for blackmail purposes, capturing indiscretions that the instigators would rather not become public knowledge. As the mirror has no auditory capability, Spot is an invaluable skill when using this device to spy upon others' conversations.

Strong divination; CL 13th; Craft Wondrous Item, *clairaudience/clairvoyance, planeshift;* Price 40,000 gp; Weight 40 lb.

Ring of Scry Detection

This unobtrusive gold ring is inscribed with images of eyes on its interior curves. The wearer of this ring constantly benefits from the *detect scrying* spell.

Moderate divination; CL 7th; Forge Ring, *detect scrying;* Price 28,000 gp.

Ring of the Evil Eye

A *ring of the evil eye* is a cursed item that appears to be a moist living eye set in a large gold ring. This disturbing item provides its wearer with a +6 bonus on Spot checks and a +2 bonus on initiative rolls, and that appears to be the item's only function. Yet if the wearer is the target of a divination (scrying) spell, he automatically fails any saving throw to resist the scrying spell, and the spell automatically penetrates the wearer's spell resistance (if any).

A simple *detect magic* spell yields only a faint transmutation aura on this item. An *identify* spell has a 1% chance per caster level to reveal the item's true properties. *Analyze dweomer* reveals the ring's true nature.

Moderate divination; CL 7th; Forge Ring, *clairaudience/clairvoyance, scrying;* Price 6,000 gp.

Scout Goggles

A magic item traditionally made in pairs, a set of *scout goggles* consists of at least two pairs of identical goggles. Each pair has two clear lenses that fit over the eyes and are held in place by a leather band securing them to the head. A pair of scout goggles is activated by command word; once triggered, anything viewed through that pair of goggles is also sent to the other pair (or pairs) in the set, allowing other wearers to see what the transmitting user sees. Most commonly, whoever normally takes "point" in a

the collected

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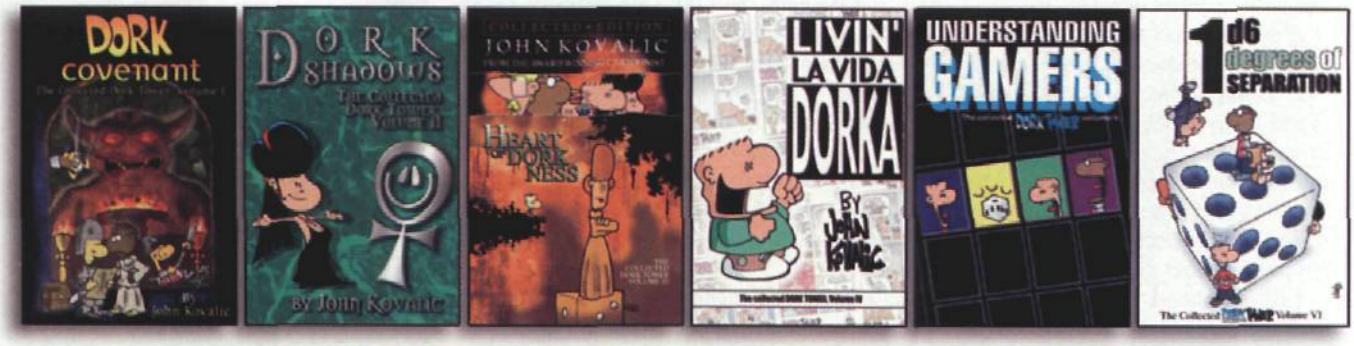

Roll 1d6 on the random humor table!

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scouting mission activates her pair and allows other party members (those who have a pair of *scout goggles* from the same set) to see through her eyes. This allows the rest of the party to know if she gets into trouble while separated from the group.

Each pair of *scout goggles* has two command words: one to send visual information to the other goggles in the set, and a second command word to receive such information. When one pair is triggered in "transmit mode," it sends a mental signal to the wearers of the other goggles in the set that information is ready to be received, then each user must activate her goggles in "receive mode" to see through the other goggles. A single pair of *scout goggles* cannot both send and receive visual information simultaneously. Repetition of the same command word "shuts off" the *scout goggles.* Transmission occurs over any distance but not across planes.

A person using a pair of *scout goggles* to see what the transmitting wearer sees becomes susceptible to any gaze attacks or visual-based spells that might affect the transmitting wearer. For instance, if a transmitting wearer encounters a medusa, she must make a Fortitude save to prevent being petrified, and so must anyone else currently tapped into her pair of *scout goggles.* Each individual makes her own saving throw in such instances.

A person with *scout goggles* in transmit mode automatically grants anyone else wearing a set in receive mode a +2 circumstance bonus to their Spot checks to notice something the transmitting member has already spotted herself (perhaps a hidden guard or the tripwire to a trap). A person wearing scout goggles in receive mode can see both what they can normally see at their location and what the transmitting *scout goggles* see without being disoriented.

A set of *scout goggles* works only with the other goggles in its own set. Additional goggles can be made and joined to an existing set, but only if all other pairs are present during the creation of the new pair, allowing them all to be attuned together.

The creation information is for a single pair of scout goggles.

Faint divination; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *clairaudience/clairvoyance;* Price 15,000 gp.

SCRYSKULL AND SCRYSKULL HELM

A *scryskull* is a handy scrying device, in many ways much like a physical *arcane eye* with even more utility. Each *scryskull* has two main components: the floating skull used as a sensor device and the larger skull used to control the sensor. This larger skull is often referred to as a *scryskull helm.*

The *scryskull* itself is made from a normal skull (usually humanoid in origin) lightly etched with faint runes that completely cover the surface. A scryskull can often be overlooked as nothing more than a normal skull, especially if spotted in an area where one might expect to see such things: among other bones on the floor of a carnivore's cave, on the shelf of a wizard's den or alchemical laboratory, and so forth. A close examination of the skull automatically reveals the runes on its surface; otherwise a creature must succeed at a DC 15 Spot check to see them.

When the user of a *scryskull helm* activates the *scryskull's* powers, he can see through the "eyes" of the *scryskull* as if using an *arcane eye* spell. When the *scryskull* is actively being used as a scrying device, twin points of red light illuminate in the skull's eye sockets.

The wearer of the *scryskull helm* can do more than see through the "eyes" of the *scryskull,* though: He can also hear sounds in the *scryskull's* location with his own auditory acuity and speak through the skull's mouth. In addition, the *scryskull* flies at a speed of 60 feet with perfect maneuverability. If deactivated while in the air, a *scryskull* sinks slowly to the ground as if under the influence of a *feather fall* spell. *Scry-skulls* have hardness 5 and 10 hit points, and they are usually three size categories smaller than the creature from which the skull was taken (a Medium creature's skull is Diminutive).

A *scryskull helm* is nearly identical in appearance to a *scryskull,* but with a few differences. First, a *scryskull helm* is often larger than the *scryskull* to which it is linked, as the helm must be placed over the head of the user and worn like a helmet. The bottom of the skull used for a *scryskull helm* is usually carved out to allow for such use. The lower jaw of the skull is not necessary for a *scryskull helm* and is often discarded. Ogre and giant skulls are commonly modified for use as *scryskull helms,* although dragon-skull helms are not unknown. The helm need not be the same type as the *scryskull.* However, close examination reveals the same types of runes lightly etched over every surface of the *scryskull helm.*

The user dons the *scryskull helm* and activates the *scryskull* via a command word, so long as both components are on the same plane of existence. At that point, he sees through the *scryskull's* "eyes" and hears through its "ears." At will, he can choose to speak through the *scryskull* and move it around via its flight abilities.

While wearing an activated *scryskull helm,* the user does not see through his own eyes or hear through his own ears, so he might be oblivious to events around him. As soon as he removes the *scryskull helm* or deactivates the *scryskull* with a command word, his normal vision and hearing is restored.

Moderate divination; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, *arcane eye, clairaudience/clairvoyance, magic mouth;* Price 25,200 gp; Weight 3 lb. (helm), 3 lb. (skull).

WARRIORS OF THE ANIMAL FIST

by Patrick Younts · illustrated by Dave McCllean

CROUCHING PANTHER, SLASHING DRAGON

Through the cultivation of martial skill and meditation, monks transcend the limits of flesh, finding mental and physical perfection as creatures of spirit that stand outside the natural order. Their journey is rigorous, insular, and ultimately, lonely.

In windswept mountain temples, fortresses buried in the heart of forests, and training halls hidden in city alleyways, small sects of martial artists follow a different road. They embrace the natural world, using combat techniques inspired by the movement and fighting spirit of one of seven animals: crane, dragon, mantis, monkey, panther, snake, or tiger. Known as shen, or "spirits," their training goes far beyond imitation; they master deadly skills and can transform into humanoid versions of their chosen animal.

Most shen begin adventuring as monks or druids, but barbarians, rangers, and rogues sometimes find themselves drawn to the way of the animal fist. On rare occasions bards, clerics, sorcerers, and wizards become shen. Few paladins or fighters willingly give up their heavy weapons and armor long enough to learn the shen's fighting secrets.

SHEN REQUIREMENTS

HIT DIE: D8

To become a shen, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +5.

Skills: Knowledge (nature) 2 ranks, Survival 3 ranks.

Feat: Improved Unarmed Strike.

Special: Additional requirements are listed for each animal shen. Upon taking a level of this class, a character must choose an animal shen and meet the additional requirements. Each animal shen is treated as a different prestige class.

SHEN CLASS SKILLS

The shen's class skills (and the key ability for each) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (any) (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str), and Tumble (Dex). Each animal shen provides other skills as class skills.

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Intelligence modifier.

SHEN ADVANCEMENT

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+2	+2	+2	AC bonus, unarmed damage
2nd	+1	+3	+3	+3	Shen ability, *ki* strike (silver)
3rd	+2	+3	+3	+3	Hybrid form (1/day)
4th	+3	+4	+4	+4	Shen ability
5th	+3	+4	+4	+4	Hybrid form (2/day), uncanny dodge
6th	+4	+5	+5	+5	Shen ability, evasion
7th	+5	+5	+5	+5	Hybrid form (3/day), improved uncanny dodge
8th	+6	+6	+6	+6	Shen ability, *ki* strike (cold iron)
9th	+6	+6	+6	+6	Hybrid form (4/day)
10th	+7	+7	+7	+7	Shen ability

SHEN CLASS FEATURES

All the following are class features of the shen prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A character gains no new proficiency with any weapon, armor, or shield for taking a level of shen.

AC Bonus (Ex): A shen gains the AC bonus class feature of the monk class, allowing the shen to gain his Wisdom bonus to AC when unarmored and unencumbered. As with the monk special ability, the shen's AC improves by +1 for every five levels the character has in the shen class (+1 at 5th level, +2 at 10th level). Monk levels stack with shen levels for the purposes of determining the increase to the AC bonus. For example, an 8th-level monk with seven levels in the shen prestige class would have a +3 bonus to his AC when unarmored and unencumbered. Levels of different animal shen also stack for the purposes of determining AC bonus increase. See the monk class feature for more guidelines about this ability.

THEY EMBRACE THE NATURAL WORLD, USING TECHNIQUES INSPIRED BY THE FIGHTING SPIRIT OF SEVEN ANIMALS.

Unarmed Damage (Ex): A shen's unarmed damage increases as a monk's unarmed damage, starting at 1d6 points of damage at 1st level for a Medium creature. Monk levels stack with shen levels for the purpose of determining unarmed damage. For example, an 8th-level monk with 7 levels in the shen prestige class deals 2d6 points of damage with an unarmed strike. Levels of different animal shen also stack for the purposes of determining unarmed damage.

Shen Ability: Starting at 2nd level, and at every even level therafter (4th, 6th, and so on), the shen receives a special ability unique to his animal style. Shen abilities are listed in the order they are received in each animal shen's description.

***Ki* Strike (Su):** At 2nd level, a shen's unarmed attacks are empowered with *ki*. His unarmed attacks are treated as silver weapons for the purpose of dealing damage to creatures with damage reduction. *Ki* strike improves with the character's shen level. At 8th level, his unarmed attacks are also treated as cold iron weapons for the purpose of dealing damage to creatures with damage reduction.

Hybrid Form (Su): Once per day at 3rd level, with additional uses at 5th, 7th, and 9th level, the shen can transform into a humanoid version of his style's namesake. This transformation requires a standard action, provokes attacks of opportunity, heals damage equal to a day's rest, and lasts one minute per two class levels.

A shen in hybrid form receives a +5 bonus on Spot, Listen, and Survival checks; has low-light vision; and has unarmed attacks considered as magic, ghost touch weapons. A shen in hybrid form can even wrestle spirits, and is able to grab and grapple incorporeal creatures. Each animal shen's hybrid form also has several unique abilities as described in its particular entry.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): At 5th level, a shen gains the ability to react to danger before his senses would normally allow him to do so. He retains his Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) even if he is caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. However, he still loses his Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized.

If a character already has uncanny dodge from another class, the character gains improved uncanny dodge instead, and the levels from the classes that grant uncanny dodge stack to determine the minimum rogue level required to flank the character.

Evasion (Ex): At 6th level or higher, if a shen makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save, he instead takes no damage. Evasion can be used only if a shen is wearing light armor or no armor. A helpless shen does not gain the benefit of evasion.

If a shen already has evasion from another class, the character automatically gains improved evasion instead.

Improved Uncanny Dodge (Ex): At 7th level and higher, a shen can no longer be flanked; he can react to opponents on opposite sides of him as easily as he can react to a single attacker. This defense denies a rogue the ability to sneak attack the shen by flanking him, unless the attacker has at least four more rogue levels than the target has shen levels.

Wild Spirit (Ex): At 9th level, the shen becomes more animalistic than ever before. He receives a +4 bonus on all saves against effects that specifically target humanoids, such as *charm person*. Creatures of the animal type that attempt to attack or charge the shen must succeed at a Will save (DC 10 + shen level + Charisma modifier) or be unable to complete the action and lose that action for the round. An animal shen that succeeds can attack normally.

The Shen also undergoes a minor but permanent physical change; he gains an animalistic feature related to his chosen style. Common features include: cat eyes, pointed ears, whiskers, multi-faceted eyes, feathers instead of hair, or a forked tongue.

Crane

While walking near his monastery, an abbot witnessed an enraged ape attacking a crane. Although the ape was stronger, it could not touch the crane, which used its wings and claws to batter its foe. Suddenly, the crane attacked and plucked out the ape's eye with his beak. The ape fell down dead. The master bowed to the crane, and both went about their business.

The crane shen knows you can't be hurt if you can't be touched; her fighting style is cautious, favoring swift dodges and parries combined with evasive footwork and powerful jumps that keep her out of an opponent's reach. Her attacks are an arsenal of high kicks, wide arcing punches, and the crane's beak, a fist formed by tightly squeezing the tips of the fingers together. The graceful movements and dramatic, beautiful stances of the crane style are ideally suited for tall, willowy bodies. Elves have an affinity for the way of the Crane.

Additional Requirements: Combat Expertise, Dodge, Balance 5 ranks, Jump 5 ranks.

Additional Class Skill: Bluff.

1st Shen Ability—Gather the Blossoms (Ex): Crane shen receive Deflect Arrows as a bonus feat. In hybrid form she can also use the feat

to deflect *magic missile, Melf's acid arrow,* and ray spells of 2nd level or lower.

2nd Shen Ability—Defensive Mastery (Ex): The crane shen is a master of defensive fighting. When fighting defensively, using Combat Expertise, or using the total defense option, the crane shen receives an additional +2 bonus to AC.

3rd Shen Ability—Wuxia (Ex): The crane shen receives a +10 competence bonus on Jump checks and determines the distanced jumped as if making a running jump even if standing still.

4th Shen Ability—Slay the Ape (Su): Using the full attack action, the Crane attempts one attack at her highest attack bonus. If successful, her opponent is required to make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + damage dealt) or be blinded. This supernatural ability works even if the opponent's eyes are shielded, and affects creatures with primary senses other than vision, "blinding" even blindsight and tremorsense. Slay the ape is usable once a day per two shen levels.

5th Shen Ability—Crane Dances in the Shallows (Su): For 2 rounds per crane shen level per day, the crane shen may move across or stand on any liquid surface as if it were solid ground. Rounds of duration need not be used consecutively. The crane shen is not immune to damage caused by traversing dangerous surfaces, but does receive a +4 bonus on applicable saving throws.

Hybrid Form: The hybrid form of a crane shen has a long beak, graceful neck and great white wings. Feathers cover every part of the hybrid's body but the shen's beak and legs, ranging in color from snow white to dark gray.

In hybrid form, a crane shen gains a +2 bonus to Dexterity, and the crane shen can fly at a speed equal to half her land speed with good maneuverability.

Dragon

Steward to the Celestial Emperor and his heavenly court, protector of the Middle Kingdom, wise counselor to hero and king, the dragon of the Eastern World is chaos and spirit; his writhing coils are the winds that stir the grassland, and his breath is the father of storms.

To follow the path of the dragon, the student learns to cultivate his internal energy, using a combination of meditation, esoteric breathing patterns, and fighting techniques that imitate the coiling and whipping of the dragon's body. The greatest dragon shen can cause injury with a touch and unleash their internal power in a devastating burst.

Additional Requirements: Weapon Focus (unarmed strike), Concentration 4 ranks, Intimidate 3 ranks.

Additional Class Skills: Diplomacy, Intimidate.

1st Shen Ability—Heart of the Dragon (Ex): The dragon shen gains Great Fortitude as a bonus feat.

2nd Shen Ability—Mandate of Heaven (Ex): The dragon shen gains Iron Will as a bonus feat.

3rd Shen Ability—*Celestial Emperor's Blessing* (Sp): By clapping his hands together, the dragon shen can cause a fan of energy to explode out from his hands. This ability mimics the *burning hands* spell except that the dragon shen can choose to have it deal acid, cold, electricity, or fire damage. Caster level is equal to the dragon shen's class level. This ability can be used once per day per two class levels. Using this ability is a standard action.

4th Shen Ability—Four Hidden Sounds (Su): By activating his internal energies with one of four specific exhaled sounds, the dragon shen's unarmed strikes deal normal damage plus 1d6 points of acid, cold, electricity, or fire damage, as he chooses. Four hidden sounds affects all unarmed attacks for 1 round, and only one type of energy may be used each round. This ability can be used once per day per two class levels, and enabling it is a free action.

5th Shen Ability—Heaven's Hand (Ex): By focusing his internal power, the dragon shen resolves all his unarmed attacks for 1 round as though he and the foes he attacks stand in an *antimagic field.* This ability can be used once per day.

Hybrid Form: The dragon shen's hybrid form possesses a sinewy, whip-thin tail, and his head has a mix of dragon and lion features, with a wide snout full of dagger-sharp teeth and a long mane of deep red or black. His body is flexible and thin, with scales that shimmer in rainbow colors, and his limbs, tipped with gleaming claws, are short but powerful. In hybrid form the dragon shen gains +2 bonus to Strength and Constitution, and he may choose to deal slashing damage with his unarmed attacks.

Mantis

A young warrior traveled to a monastery, seeking to test his skills. He was easily defeated by the lowest-ranking monk. Ashamed, he retreated to the mountains to meditate and train. One morning he was witness to a fight between a cicada and a

NEW FEATS FOR MARTIAL ARTISTS

These new feats can add some martial-arts flair to any character.

DEFT FIST

It's rumored the greatest masters can strike down enemies who cower behind stone walls.

Prerequisites: Dex 13, Wis 13, Improved Unarmed Strike, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Benefit: When making an unarmed melee attack against a foe with cover (except total cover), your target does not gain the normal cover bonus to Armor Class.

KUNG FU GENIUS

Some styles of martial arts require the student to memorize advanced medical text and anatomical charts. These styles favor the intellectual over the introspective.

Prerequisites: Int 13, must be gained at or before the first level of the monk class is taken.

Benefit: You use your Intelligence modifier rather than Wisdom for all monk special abilities that normally rely on Wisdom.

RING THE GOLDEN BELL

With the rush of air from a single precise strike, skilled martial artists can extinguish a candle flame from several feet away. Legendary masters developed this ability to the point that they could ring a thousand-pound bell using only a finger strike from 20 feet away.

Prerequisites: Wis 13, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike), base attack bonus +5.

Benefit: A number of times per day equal to 1 plus your Wisdom bonus, you may inflict unarmed strike damage with a successful ranged attack. This attack has a range increment equal to 5 feet plus 5 feet per point of Wisdom bonus. Normal cover modifiers apply. This attack can deliver any effect your unarmed strike can normally deliver, such as a stunning attack due to the Stunning Fist feat.

praying mantis. The mantis's use of quick claw jabs and grappling to overwhelm the cicada inspired him, and he adopted its strategy as his own. When he returned to the temple, he defeated fully half the monks in challenge matches and was welcomed as a senior brother. Word of his accomplishment spread quickly, and students flocked to the monastery. In time, the mantis style became one of the world's most famous arts.

HIS WRITHING COILS ARE THE WINDS THAT STIR THE GRASSLAND, AND HIS BREATH IS THE FATHER OF STORMS.

The mantis shen's form focuses on joint locks and quick strikes to the eyes, temples, and throat. The primary technique is the mantis fist, formed by bending the wrist and extending the index finger, supported by the thumb. A mantis shen is skilled at tripping and disarming opponents, and attacks well-armed opponents with confidence.

Additional Requirements: Combat Expertise, Improved Trip, Concentration 2 ranks, Escape Artist 5 ranks.

Additional Class Skill: Intimidate.

1st Shen Ability—Improved Grapple (Ex): The mantis shen gains Improved Grapple as a bonus feat. If the mantis shen already has the Improved Grapple feat, she gains a +6 bonus on grapple checks rather than the normal +4 bonus granted by the feat.

2nd Shen Ability—Chi Sau (Ex): The mantis shen trains in chi sau, or sticky hands technique, learning to sense her opponent's location and movement first by touch, then by simple displacement of air. She gains the Blind-Fight feat as a bonus feat.

3rd Shen Ability—Defang the Snake (Ex): The mantis shen is not penalized for using a light weapon (including an unarmed strike) when attempting to disarm a foe.

4th Shen Ability—Superior Trip (Ex): A mantis shen who succeeds at a trip attempt deals her unarmed strike damage in addition to knocking the target prone.

5th Shen Ability—One Finger Strike (Ex): Once per day per mantis shen level, a mantis shen can pierce an enemy's flesh and cause a bleeding wound, dealing 1 point of Constitution damage from blood loss in addition to the attack's normal damage. Immediately after a foe is damaged by a successful unarmed strike, a mantis shen can declare the attack a one finger strike. Creatures immune to critical hits are immune to the Constitution damage dealt by this attack.

Hybrid Form: The mantis hybrid form is an insect-like horror standing tall on spindly legs. Her eyes are huge and multifaceted, bulging over razor mandibles that jut from her mouth. Her entire body is armored with thick green chitinous scales, and each finger ends in a long claw of chitin.

The mantis shen in hybrid form gains a +4 enhancement bonus to her natural armor and benefits from the Improved Grab ability. Her unarmed attacks inflict piercing, slashing, or bludgeoning damage, as she chooses.

Monkey

A young warrior with a weakness for drink was imprisoned for fighting. His jail cell had no bars, and the prison gate was always open, but he never dared to run. Just beyond the gate was a tree where five monkeys lived. The monkeys were always drunk on sour wine the prison warden provided, and they beat anyone who came near them with their long arms or branches torn from the tree. Since no one dared come near, the monkeys spent their days playing in the tree, drinking, and fighting with each other as they leapt from limb to limb. The young warrior studied their movements until he matched them flip for flip, then he walked through the gate, knocked the monkeys unconscious, and went home.

The monkey shen uses acrobatic skill and unpredictable footwork, coupled with quick strikes from every angle and direction, to frustrate his opponents. He's as likely to wield a quarterstaff as he is his hands and feet, and there is no one more skilled in its use. Monkey shen appear almost playful in combat, springing off tables, hanging from rafters, and flipping over enemies, but only the most dedicated and physically gifted can master the monkey shen style.

Additional Requirements: Weapon Focus (quarterstaff), Balance 5 ranks, Tumble 5 ranks.

Additional Class Skills: Bluff, Perform.

1st Shen Ability—Tall Monkey (Ex): At 2nd level, the monkey shen's acrobatic fighting style allows him to leap over obstacles with minimal effort. A monkey shen can leap onto any inanimate object equal to or less his height without a Jump check.

2nd Shen Ability—Clever Monkey (Ex): At 4th level, the monkey shen may attack with the quarterstaff or with unarmed attacks as though he has the Improved Two-Weapon Fighting feat. If the shen already has the Improved Two-Weapon Fighting feat, he may attack with the quarterstaff as though he has the Greater Two-Weapon Fighting feat.

3rd Shen Ability—Monkey King Staff (Ex): A monkey shen is a master of quarterstaff combat. If he has the Stunning Fist feat, he may deliver a stunning attack with a blow from a quarterstaff rather than an unarmed attack. In addition, the monkey shen can utilize the Weapon Finesse feat with both ends of the quarterstaff.

4th Shen Ability—Drunken Monkey (Ex): A monkey shen's footwork is confusing to opponents. When provoking an attack of opportunity due to moving through an opponent's threatened area, the monkey shen gains a +2 dodge bonus to his AC.

5th Shen Ability—Tumbling Boxing (Ex): The monkey shen tumbles with such ease that he can take 10 whenever he attempts a tumbling maneuver, even when distracted or endangered. Additionally, the monkey shen can attempt a Tumble check (DC 10 + opponent's Strength score) when tripped or overrun. A success means the monkey shen regains his footing immediately, negating the free attack granted by the Improved Trip feat.

Hybrid Form: The monkey hybrid form is lean and wiry, with a pronounced stoop and arms reaching just past the knee. Short fur the color of the shen's hair covers everywhere except the hands, feet, and face.

In addition to the abilities shared by all shen in hybrid form, the monkey shen enjoys several additional benefits. He receives a +4 bonus to Dexterity,

and he may use his feet interchangeably with his hands (and his hands as feet) for any action except casting spells. Finally, the monkey shen gains a climb speed equal to his base land speed.

Panther

An unarmed monk crept among the tents of Zhang, the traitor warlord. She slipped through pools of darkness, moving tent to tent, and no guard noted her passing. At last she stood before the warlord's tent. The emperor's only son lay bound within, a prize that ensured the traitor's safety. The monk stepped inside. In later years, before his ascension, the prince would say only that he had been saved, and the traitor punished, by a shadow who faded away like smoke in the night.

The panther shen, sometimes known as the leopard shen, combines the strength of the tiger with the agility of the crane in a martial art famous for its lightning fast combinations and footwork. She prefers punches to kicks, and the panther fist, made by curling the first and second knuckles toward the palm, is her staple technique. A panther shen relies on stealth over force, stalking her opponents the way her namesake stalks a meal. When not in combat she moves with a measured, almost lazy, pace, but her natural grace is obvious to all.

Additional Requirements: Improved Initiative, Hide 5 ranks, Move Silently 5 ranks.

Additional Class Skill: Search.

1st Shen Ability—Panther Step (Ex): The panther gains an unarmored speed bonus just like the monk class. The panther shen gains a speed bonus as a monk of a level equal to her panther shen level plus 1 level. If the panther shen also has monk levels, the character's monk levels add to the panther shen levels to determine the character's unarmored base speed.

2nd Shen Ability—Like the Wind (Ex): The panther shen gains Lightning Reflexes as a bonus feat.

3rd Shen Ability—Chain Punches (Ex): The panther shen is so accustomed to unleashing rapid fire strikes that her penalty when using Flurry of Blows is reduced to -1 per attack.

4th Shen Ability—Seize the Moment (Ex): The panther gains a +4 bonus to initiative.

5th Shen Ability—Swift Reprisal (Ex): Whenever an opponent makes a melee attack against the panther shen and misses, the panther shen can exploit the opening to take an immediate attack of opportunity against that opponent. The opponent must be within a square threatened by the panther shen for her to use this ability.

Hybrid Form: The panther hybrid form is sleek and strong, with the rippling muscle and effortless grace of a trained dancer. Fine hair covers her body, commonly midnight black. Her head resembles a panther's, with luminous green eyes and razor teeth. Hands and feet are padded and end in claws, and a long tail lashes behind her. She receives a +2 bonus to Strength and Dexterity in hybrid form. In hybrid form, the panther shen is considered to have the Spring Attack feat, even if she doesn't meet the requirements. A panther shen can inflict bludgeoning or slashing damage when attacking unarmed, as she chooses.

Snake

A young monk cooling his feet in the river watched as a hawk swooped down to catch a snake. The snake twisted its body this way and that, always out of reach of the hawk. All at once, the snake struck, and with a single bite killed the hawk. Impressed, the monk ran to his temple and told the abbot what he had seen. The abbot smiled and said, "You have learned a valuable lesson. The true master needs no second blow."

The secret of the snake style is knowledge of pressure points and meridian lines. A snake shen spends years poring over medical treatises, absorbing charts and experimenting on himself and his fellow students to predict the effects of finger strikes against every inch of the body. Obscure variables of time of day and year relating to the effect of each pressure point attack must be memorized, so only the most intelligent students thrive in the snake style. The snake shen's comprehensive knowledge of the body's functions makes them excellent healers; they are often found in major cities, operating clinics that double as training halls.

Additional Requirements: Stunning Fist, Concentration 4 ranks, Heal 2 ranks.

Additional Class Skills: Heal, Profession.

1st Shen Ability—Stunning Blow (Ex): A snake shen with the Stunning Fist feat may use his Intelligence modifier instead of his Wisdom modifier to determine the Fortitude save DC of his Stunning Fist attacks. In addition, he may make one additional stunning fist attack per day.

2nd Shen Ability—Calculated Blow (Ex): The snake receives Improved Critical (unarmed strike) as a bonus feat.

3rd Shen Ability—Hands of a Surgeon (Ex): The snake shen knows how to turn his encyclopedic knowledge of anatomy to his

NEW EXOTIC WEAPONS

The exotic weapons on this and the following page make great additions to any campaign, especially those that emphasize martial-arts action.

ROPE DART

A rope dart consists of a spike or piercing blade attached to a 20-foot length of rope. Propelled by precise strikes from the hands, feet, elbows, and knees, combined with intricate coiling of the rope around every part of the body, the rope dart can stab at opponents from every direction and angle at incredible speed.

A rope dart has a long reach, so you can strike opponents 15 feet away with it. In addition, unlike most other weapons with reach, it can be used against an adjacent foe.

Because the rope dart can wrap around an enemy's leg or other limb, you can make trip attacks with it. If you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop the rope dart to avoid being tripped.

When using a rope dart, you get a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to disarm an opponent (including the roll to avoid being disarmed if such an attempt fails).

You can use the Weapon Finesse feat to apply your Dexterity modifier instead of your Strength modifier to attack rolls with a rope dart sized for you, even though it isn't a light weapon for you.

Monks are not automatically proficient with the rope dart, but if they take the feat Exotic Weapon Proficiency (rope dart), they can use the rope dart when making attacks with their flurry of blows ability.

A variation of the rope dart called the meteor hammer exists, replacing the dart with a solid metal ball that does bludgeoning damage rather than piercing damage. A character proficient with the rope dart is proficient with the meteor hammer.

Type: Two-handed; **Cost:** 3 gp; **Damage (S):** 1d3; **Damage (M):** 1d4; **Critical:** x2; **Range Increment:** —; **Weight:** 4 lb.; **Damage Type:** Piercing.

TIGER HOOK SWORD

A tiger hook sword is the size of a longsword, but the first quarter of the blade is curved forward like a fishhook. The hilt comes to a sharp point, and an outward pointing crescent blade serves as a hand guard and striking surface.

A tiger hook sword grants a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to disarm an opponent (including the roll to avoid being disarmed if such an attempt fails).

You can make trip attacks with it, and you gain a +2 bonus to trip attempts made with the weapon. If you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop the tiger hook sword to avoid being tripped.

Monks are not automatically proficient with the tiger hook sword, but if they take the feat Exotic Weapon Proficiency (tiger hook sword), they can use the tiger hook sword when making attacks with their flurry of blows ability.

Type: One-handed; **Cost:** 35 gp; **Damage (S):** 1d6; **Damage (M):** 1d8; **Critical:** x2; **Range Increment:** –; **Weight:** 6 lb.; **Damage Type:** Slashing.

advantage in combat. When fighting a humanoid creature, the snake shen adds his Intelligence bonus, rather than Strength, to his damage rolls and threatens a critical on an 18-20. Hands of a Surgeon can only be used with unarmed strikes, and it cannot be used against constructs, undead, incorporeal creatures, or creatures immune to critical hits.

4th Shen Ability—Poison Hand Method (Ex): Poison hand method uses vicious blows aimed at the most vulnerable areas of the body. Once a day per class level, a snake shen can, with a successful unarmed strike, inflict an automatic critical hit. This attempt must be declared beforehand, and failure to hit still constitutes use of the ability. If the normal attack roll results in a critical hit, damage is tripled. This ability can only be used with unarmed strikes, and it has no effect on creatures immune to critical hits.

5th Shen Ability—Healing Touch (Su): Through manipulation of *ki* and pressure points, a snake shen can heal himself and others, as well as cure a variety of ailments. With a touch and as a full round action, the shen may do one of the following: heal hit points equivalent to a day's rest, neutralize poison, cure blindness or deafness, remove paralysis, or cancel a *hold* spell. This ability is usable once a day per 2 snake shen levels.

Hybrid Form: A snake hybrid has a whip-thin body and a snake head. He is covered in scales, usually of a dark greenish-black color, but the scales can be of any pattern found in nature. His tongue is long and forked, flicking out past long retractable fangs to taste the air. A snake shen gains a +2 bonus to Dexterity and Intelligence while in hybrid form, and gains a bite attack that deals piercing unarmed strike damage.

Tiger

An old monk searched the mountains for a suitable spot to build a temple. One morning he was ambushed by bandits and sorely wounded. As the bandits closed in, a female tiger leapt from the bushes and slew them all. She gently lifted the injured monk in her jaws, set him on her back, and bounded to her mountaintop cave. She guarded the injured monk for days, nursing him with her milk and licking his wounds. When the old monk was healed, he resolved to build his temple on the spot where the tiger had saved him, and in this way he honored her. For centuries, the fighting monks of that temple were renowned for their ferocious tempers and strength.

The tiger style develops strength and toughness to the limit of human potential. A tiger shen is fearless, throwing herself into battle, accepting blows without flinching, and overwhelming enemies with powerful strikes. She favors the tiger claw, formed by curling the fingers in toward the palm, used to rake, tear, and seize flesh. Tiger shen make excellent bodyguards; they're so intimidating that only the confident or foolish consider challenging them, even when not in hybrid form.

Additional Requirements: Power Attack, Concentration 2 ranks, Intimidate 4 ranks.

Additional Class Skill: Intimidate.

1st Shen Ability—Paralyzing Stroke (Ex): A tiger shen can focus all her energy into a mighty strike that ignores armor. Using a full-round action, the tiger can make a single melee attack as a touch attack, dealing damage normally. A creature damaged by the strike must make a Fortitude save (DC 10+ shen level + Strength modifier) or be paralyzed for 1 round. The killing stroke ability can be used once per day per shen level. Failure to connect with the killing stroke uses one of the panther shen's uses per day.

2nd Shen Ability—Tiger's Toughness (Ex): The tiger shen gains Toughness as a bonus feat.

3rd Shen Ability—Fearful Symmetry (Ex): The tiger shen is immune to fear effects.

4th Shen Ability—Primal Force (Ex): The tiger shen gains Endurance as a bonus feat.

5th Shen Ability—Frenzy (Ex): Once per day as a free action, the tiger shen can enter a frenzied state. While frenzied, she gains a +4 bonus to Strength and damage reduction 1/—. A frenzied shen cannot be stunned and is immune to nonlethal damage. The frenzy lasts 1 round plus the tiger shen's new Strength modifier. A frenzy does not cause the tiger shen to become fatigued.

Hybrid Form: The tiger hybrid possesses unmatched power. Her body, covered in coarse orange hair striped with black, bulges with muscle. Standing tall, with a tiger's head, gleaming claws, and a tail that whips violently behind her, the tiger shen is a fearsome sight. A tiger shen in hybrid form gains a +4 bonus to Strength, and she may choose to deal bludgeoning or slashing damage with her unarmed strikes.

Aerial Avenger

Wrath on Wings

by Monte Cook · illustrated by Cara Mitten

Some say there is a brotherhood—unspoken, perhaps—among those who can leave the ground behind and take to the sky. The unbridled freedom enjoyed by such creatures breeds jealousy in their earthbound lessers.

A role common among creatures as diverse as dragons, cloud giants, and harpies, the aerial avenger is a combatant trained to utilize the ability to fly to its utmost. They come streaking out of the sky to attack those below with skill and ferocity, inspiring dread in all who experience their assaults.

Aerial avengers are quite rare among humanoid races, although sometimes a sorcerer with the ability to magically fly takes up the necessary training. Usually however, aerial avengers are creatures like mephits, celestials, certain fiends, giant eagles, sphinxes, dragons (and half-dragons), sprites, and couatls—to name just a few. Even beholders and other creatures that fly by non-traditional means sometimes become aerial avengers.

Usually, an aerial avenger serves as a steward over his fellow creatures, defending them against attack and retaliating against their enemies. They sometimes form into efficient cadres of flying warriors.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the aerial avenger prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Aerial avengers are proficient with all simple and martial weapons but with no armor or shields.

Flyby Attack: At 1st level, the aerial avenger gets Flyby Attack as a bonus feat.

Momentum (Ex): A 2nd-level aerial avenger learns to use his momentum and weight to his advantage while fighting. If in the air, the aerial avenger gains a +1 competence bonus to damage. At 5th level, this bonus becomes +2, and at 8th level it rises to +3.

Power Dive (Ex): When a 2nd-level aerial avenger makes a dive (charge) attack, he deals an additional +1d6 points of damage if he hits.

Maneuverability Increase (Ex): At 3rd level, the aerial avenger's maneuverability increases by one rank, so that an aerial avenger with an average maneuverability gains good maneuverability. If the aerial avenger's maneuverability is already perfect, this ability cannot affect it. The aerial avenger's maneuverability increases again at 7th level.

Speed (Ex): At 3rd level, the aerial avenger learns to increase his speed by +10 feet. This bonus increases by +10 feet at 8th level.

Death From Above (Ex): Through training and practice, the 4th-level aerial avenger improves his attack bonus while airborne. If in the air above a foe, the aerial avenger gains a +1 competence bonus to attacks. At 9th level, this bonus increases to +2.

Range Increase (Ex): The 4th-level aerial avenger, when making a ranged attack while in the air, increases the distance of any range increment (or in the case of spells that require a ranged attack roll, an increase in the overall range) by 50%.

Swoop (Ex): At 6th level, the aerial avenger learns to make a devastating attack. While flying in a straight line (using a full-round action), the aerial avenger can move his speed, making a melee attack at any foe within reach on his path. For each foe attacked beyond the first, each attack suffers a -1 attack penalty, so the aerial avenger must declare how many foes he attacks before he starts (minimum two). The aerial avenger gives up his regular attacks to take this action. This is an extraordinary ability that draws no attacks of opportunity, even if the aerial avenger passes through threatened areas on his way through the swoop.

Terrifying Shriek (Ex): The 10th-level aerial avenger can add a shrill shriek to any swoop attack, causing all creatures within 50 feet of the point of the first attack to make a Will saving throw (DC 20 plus the aerial avenger's Charisma modifier) or become panicked for 1d6+4 rounds. D

Aerial Avenger Requirements

To qualify to become an aerial avenger, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Base Reflex Save: +3.

Skills: Tumble 5 ranks.

Feats: Dodge, Mobility.

Special: Must have a fly speed or the ability to cast *fly* at least twice per day.

Aerial Avenger Class Skills

Hit Die: D8

The aerial avenger's class skills (and the key ability for each) are: Balance (Dex), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str), and Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Aerial Avenger Advancement

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Flyby Attack
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	Momentum +1, power dive
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Maneuverability increase, speed +10 feet
4	+3	+1	+4	+1	Death from above +1, range increase
5	+3	+1	+4	+1	Momentum +2
6	+4	+2	+5	+2	Swoop
7	+5	+2	+5	+2	Maneuverability increase, speed +10 feet
8	+6	+2	+6	+2	Momentum +3
9	+6	+3	+6	+3	Death from above +2
10	+7	+3	+7	+3	Terrifying shriek

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Salammbo

The Eaters of Vile Things

by Clifford Horowitz

The title of this game comes directly from one of its main characters: Salammbo, high priestess of the goddess Tanith and daughter to the great Carthaginian general Hamilcar. In contrast to most other fantasy games, in Salammbo you must often outwit your opponents rather than slay them outright. Puzzle based, the game is heavy on problem solving and has an intriguing plot that keeps a player's interest from the first scene.

The game is set in a fantastic version of Carthage, just after the Carthaginian defeat at the hands of Rome. The mercenaries employed by the great city have returned despite their loss to collect the money promised them at the beginning of their campaign.

However, you are not part of the returning armies (not at first at least). Instead, you play the part of Spendius, a slave condemned to death for displaying a lack of fervor while working. What starts off as a simple escape becomes a continued quest for freedom that takes you from slave, to mercenary, and eventually to general—but not before you encounter some very interesting characters along the way.

VILLAGE OF THE EATERS OF VILE THINGS

In the game, the Village of the Eaters of Vile Things is a small squatter settlement in the shadows of Carthage's waterworks, exiled from the great city because of their belief that "all flesh is made to be eaten." A perpetually starving people, they fear nothing when the hunger takes them. While only a small part of the game, this unusual settlement is rich with ideas for your D&D game.

Plague of Famine

The Eaters of Vile Things are a perpetually hungry lot, but they never succumb to starvation. Their bodies may wither and their bellies groan, but not one of them ever actually dies from lack of food.

The same curse that afflicts them sustains them, a communicable plague of necromantic energy that slowly transforms them into ghouls. This is a slow process, and the transformation is so gradual that many Eaters fail to realize their own deaths. This disease, called the plague of famine by those who know of it, is highly contagious. Any significant physical contact with a carrier is enough to risk contagion, and some Eater villages are so

PLAGUE OF FAMINE

Method of Infection	DC
Contact, infected area	10
Contact, infected person	15
Ingestion	25
Ongoing Infection	10 + subdual damage

Incubation/Damage: Special. The plague of famine does not inflict ability damage once it successfully infects a host, and it remains dormant until triggered by the effects of starvation. Once the victim takes any damage from thirst or hunger, he must make a Fortitude save. The DC for this save is 10 plus the total amount of starvation damage the victim sustained since becoming infected. Failing this save means that the effects of the starvation subdual damage begin to accrue.

Every time starvation damage accumulates in this way, keep track of it separately. This subdual damage heals normally and does not count toward the character's total damage once recovered, but it continues to amass every time he suffers starvation damage and fails his Fortitude save. Once this amount exceeds the character's total hit points, the plague consumes him and he gains the ghoul template (see *Dragon* #307). You might even consider applying the ravenous template to ghouls created by this disease.

While *cure disease* can remove the infection, the plague of famine is particularly resilient. The victim is treated as having spell resistance against all attempts to cure the sickness equal to the disease's current ongoing infection DC. Magical cures are the only way to rid a victim of his infection; natural healing can only hold off the effects of the disease, not purge it from the body.

thoroughly infested with the disease that merely staying in the area is enough to contract the sickness. Woe to the soul who eats anything prepared by an Eater. Since the plague of famine roots in the stomach, ingesting it is the most potent method of infection.

The disease starts off subtly, lying dormant in a victim with no symptoms of any kind, only waking when hunger strikes the host. Then it seizes the stomach and never lets go, preserving the sensation of hunger. While a victim might recover starvation damage by eating and drinking normally, he will forever feel the effects of this deprivation. No matter how much he eats, his stomach continues to churn and growl, and his throat continually burns. While a person might be able to live with being perpetually peckish, each bout of hunger mounts on the last. Soon the victim cannot resist the compulsion to eat everything and everyone around him. The character looks increasingly ghoulish as his appetite mounts, until he dies and becomes a ghoul.

RAVENOUS BERSERKERS

"When we are hungry we have no fear. Not of the mercenaries. Not of the Carthaginians. Not of you."

So threatens the leader of the Eaters of Vile Things. The Eaters might be a sullen bunch that squat outside Carthage, but when their hunger grows too strong, their ragged community is twice as vicious as any trained army unit.

Ravenous Template

"Ravenous" is a template that can be added to any corporeal undead (referred to hereafter as the "base creature"). It is most common among undead that feast on humanoid flesh, such as ghouls, ghasts, and some zombies. A ravenous undead possesses an exaggerated maw filled with especially sharp, jagged teeth. Some even sport multiple rows of teeth. It can also unhinge its jaw in order to take larger bites and feed its perpetual hunger all the quicker. A ravenous undead uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Attacks: A ravenous creature retains all the attacks of the base creature and also gains a bite attack if it didn't already have one.

Damage: Ravenous creatures have bite attacks. If the base creature does not have this attack form, use the damage values in the table below. Creatures with natural bite attacks deal damage as if they were one size larger on the table below or retain their original damage, whichever is better.

Size	Damage
Fine	1
Diminutive	1d2
Tiny	1d3
Small	1d4
Medium	1d6
Large	1d8
Huge	2d6
Gargantuan	2d8
Colossal	4d6

Special Attacks: A ravenous creature retains all the special attacks of the base creature and also gains those listed below.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the ravenous creature must hit with a natural attack. If it gets a hold, it can feed.

Feed (Ex): A ravenous creature deals automatic bite damage with a successful grapple check.

Need to Feed (Ex): A ravenous creature is driven by a consuming hunger, not a lust for battle. Whenever it slays a living opponent, the ravenous undead must succeed at a DC 15 Will save or immediately stop to eat its kill. When eating, a ravenous creature can do nothing else. It loses its Dexterity bonus to AC and does not make attacks of opportunity.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +4, Dex +2.

Climate/Terrain: Any.

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +1.

Treasure: Half of the base creature's treasure. Ravenous undead sometimes collect wealth if their base type is inclined to, but their hunger often causes them to overlook treasure in favor of flesh.

Alignment: Any non-good.

Advancement: Same as the base creature.

FOR YOUR CHARACTER

If you're interested in a desperate or tragic character, the plague of famine presents just such an opportunity. Not as debilitating as most diseases in D&D, the plague allows you to continue playing your character at virtually full effectiveness even while ill. It is not easily cured and doesn't go away on its own, meaning that special measures have to be taken if someone is ever to be rid of it. Its especially dire consequences make it a continually looming threat, but since most D&D campaigns rarely make obtaining food difficult, an infected character can expect to survive for quite a while.

Even if you choose not to burden your own character with carrying the disease, you can still create a PC who has been touched by it. If he's not the one who risks degenerating into a ghoul, then perhaps a loved one suffers from the plague. All the factors that make the plague of famine a good plot device for an infected PC apply to NPCs as well. Your character could search just as desperately for a cure to the plague if his brother is infected as he would if he bore the disease himself.

As an interesting twist, you might think about the possibility of having someone dear to your character succumb to the plague. This person would still remember who they were and might even have affection for your character, but she would clearly have turned into an undead horror. Can these afflicted souls be cured and restored, and would your character suffer them to live in their undead state while he searches for that answer?

FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

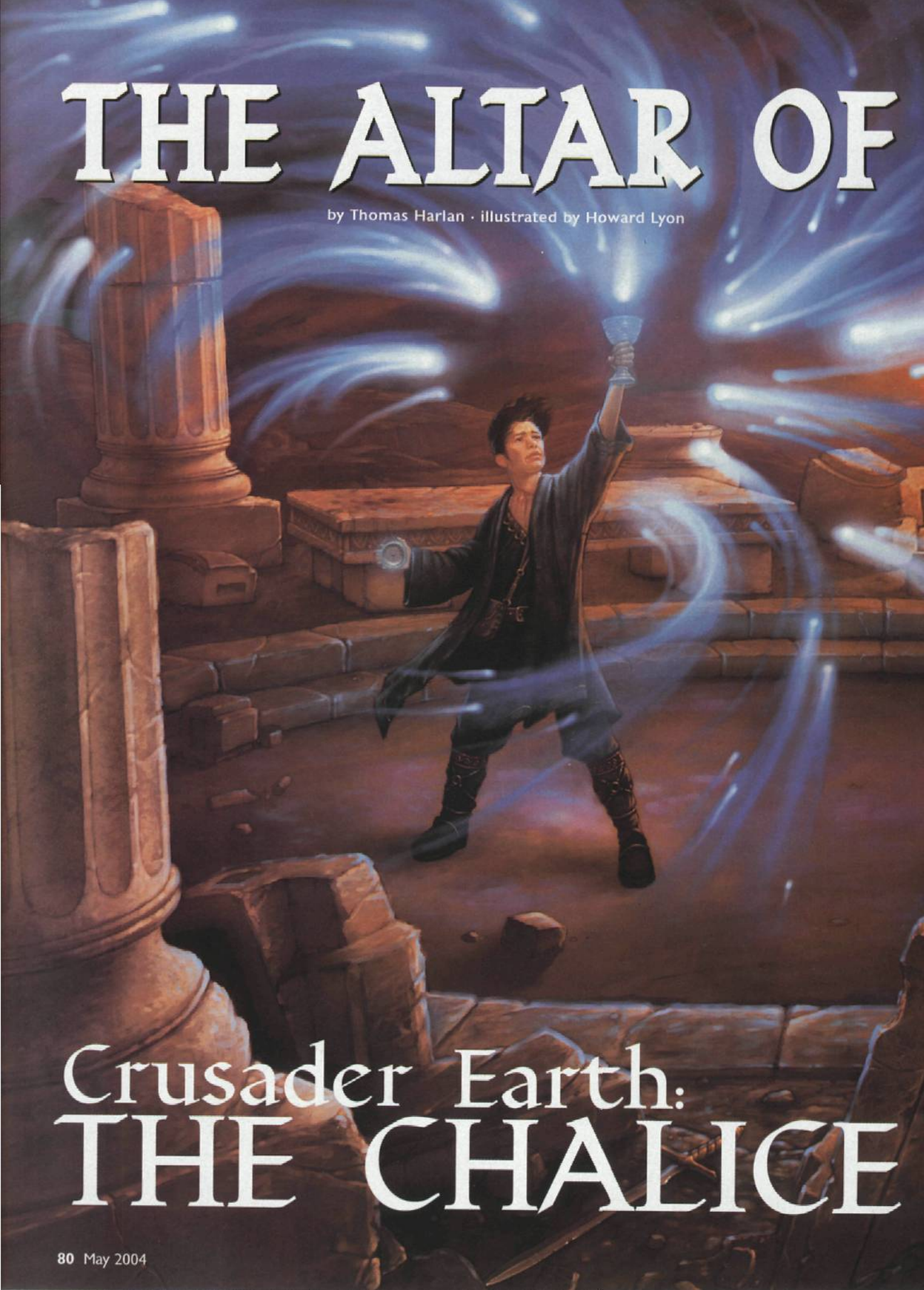
With a long incubation period and an easily communicable nature, the plague of famine has the makings of a major disaster. Unknowing people fleeing an epidemic could carry it to other population centers, where the disease spreads rapidly, first depleting an area's available food and then turning whole populations into undead. You could construct an entire campaign out of the struggle to keep the plague in check and stamp out the resulting ghouls.

PCs could guard food caravans as foodstuffs become increasingly valuable, or serve as border guards, screening the infected from the healthy. They might brave ravenous ghouls in order to claim bounties for their heads. Hardier heroes even have the option of trekking into the diseased lands to either find the cause of the contagion or to burn the dead lands to ash. Humanitarian efforts include sending surplus food to plague areas in a desperate attempt to keep the population fed and hold off their transformation into undead.

How far the plague spreads depends on you. This could be a short-lived crisis, solved by seeking out the necromancer who developed the plague, slaying him, and destroying the tower that serves as a focus for his power, thus instantly curing all those suffering from the disease. It could be a lengthy conflict, solved only by closing the myriad of diminutive portals that have released the taint of negative energy into the world. Or it could be a world-changing event with no cure in sight. Characters can help contain the menace and stop the spread of the disease, but when the dust settles, borders have shifted, power balances have changed, and there is still a land of disease, death, and perpetual hunger.

THE ALTAR OF

by Thomas Harlan · illustrated by Howard Lyon



Crusader Earth: THE CHALICE

DUZARES OF LIFE #4

PREVIOUS WORKS BY THOMAS HARLAN

"Giants in the Earth: Strangers in Bethlehem," *Dragon* #284 (Jun 2001)
"Mysterious Ways," *Dungeon* #86 (May/Jun 2001)

SHORT STORIES (IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

"Pilgrim's Test," *Dragon* #284
"The Tomb," *Dragon* #296
"Theodora's Ladder," *Dragon* #308
"Chalice of Life: The Leper's Hand," *Dragon* #314
"Chalice of Life: Hecate's Ring," *Dragon* #316
"Chalice of Life: The Kalif's Coffin," *Dragon* #318
"Chalice of Life: The Altar of Duzares," *Dragon* #319

PREVIOUSLY, IN "THE KALIF'S COFFIN"

Harold Godwinson, a Knight of the Temple of Jerusalem, and Theodora, a Byzantine nun, watched the fragment of the Chalice of Life called "Hecate's Ring" slip through their fingers in Constantinople. Victorious, Hasan the Younger fled with the relic, intending to use its power to resurrect his lord and master, the kalif Nizar. With the help of Matthias, a Byzantine witch-hunter known to Theodora, our heroes landed on the Levantine coast near Ascelon and made their way inland, toward the Rose-Red City of Petra, where of old the Chalice was first wrought. . . .

SOUTH OF THE DEAD SEA, LATE AUTUMN AD 1114

Sand the color of parched blood spilled away from Harold Godwinson's boot, scattering across a drift of splintered pottery. The tall Saxon's face lifted, cold blue eyes drifting across the rampart of barren cliffs rising above the dry streambed. The sun was setting, and the hot glow of late afternoon made the pillars and cliffs blocking their way shimmer with intense color.

"How . . . pretty," Theodora gasped, wheezing to a halt beside him.

The little old Greek woman was shrouded by an abaya of mottled black cloth. Only her eyes were visible above the protective veil. She raised a wrinkled hand toward the nearest boulder. The air between her and the stone rippled with heat. "Ah . . . a very furnace you've led us into. This is a hellish place."

"That is God's truth," Harold said quietly, turning to frown at the third of their little party.

The young Italian was on his hands and knees, panting like a sick dog.

"Keep moving," the Saxon hissed at Davide, "we've a long climb before we sleep."

"Climb?" The poet raised his eyes to the mountain looming above them, seeing nothing but sheer cliffs striped red and white with eroding stone. "Impossible. . ." The Italian's round features sagged, flesh waxy from the effort of their reckless dash across the desert from the Mediterranean coast.

Harold turned away. In two long strides, he vanished between a pair of crumbling pillars and the sound of his boots scraping on stone grew distant among the rocks. Theodora stared pensively after the Saxon and shifted her grip on an age-blackened cane. "Come, lad," she said gently to Davide, reaching out a hand. "There will be a path."

Together, the nun and the poet scrambled over the fallen stone and found—to Davide's amazement—a stair hewn from the side of a narrow ravine and leading upward into the mountain fastness.

In the slot canyon, night came swiftly. Harold did not reappear. In the darkness, Theodora inched upward, the poet clinging to her skirts. The chittering of bats and the distant hooting of desert boumi kept her company. In her vest, little Athené stirred, hearing her cousins aloft on the night air.

"Hush now," the old woman said, gentling the pale-feathered owl onto her shoulder. "Lend me your eyes for a bit, scruff. Let me see."

A prickling feeling shivered over Theodora's arms and neck, and the gloom lifted. The flitting gleam of night-flying insects drew her eye—and then she became aware of a wan glow emanating from the cliff-face at her shoulder.

> "Ah . . . a very furnace you've led us into. **This is a hellish place.**"

"Ah now . . . do you feel that?" Her night-eyes revealed the faces of high-cheeked kings, rampant horses, lines of men carrying sheaves of grain, and a god-bull garlanded with summer flowers shining forth from the cliff-face. "Do you see the ancient carvings?"

"I feel an unpleasant chill," the Italian muttered, clutching his dusty cloak tight around hunched shoulders. "And an uneasiness. But I see nothing! Not even your graying head."

"Keep close then," Theodora said. The carvings grew clearer as she climbed the long stairway, and the figures became progressively less human, thin and sharp, as though hawks had draped themselves in the flayed skins of men. The sacrifices carried to the altars changed, too, as they pressed on. Theodora turned her face away.

"What is it?" Davide hissed, pudgy hand clutching tight on her wrist. Her skin was cold as his now.

Theodora blinked, warm light washing across her veil, and said "A window, Mother Mary bless us, and lit by firelight."

A whitewashed stone house perched where the stair climbed out of the canyon. Theodora made sure Davide was bedded down on a pallet before she parted the curtain, which served the monks as a door.

A pair of voices fell silent as she emerged.

Her nose tickled with the dry papery smell of incense, sweat, and unwashed bodies. Little Athené drifted away from her shoulder, spiraling up into the star-strewn sky.

"This is Brother Josephus," Harold's voice said out of the darkness. He sounded worn and tired. The old woman nodded politely to a dark shape on her left, and sat down companion-ably close to the Saxon. "He is a hell-bound heretic of a Monophysite, but a good man withal."

"You have made each other's acquaintance before?" Theodora tried to keep curiosity from her voice, but it was clear the knight had intended to reach this very shelter. *How could he know of such a remote sanctuary save having come this way before?*

"We rarely have guests," The old monk rasped, unused to speech. "But by the Lord's grace you are welcome. Is your companion well?"

"He may live," Theodora allowed, "with rest and care." She turned toward Harold, who was just visible in the pale starlight. "We should—"

"We enter the city tomorrow," he said tightly. "There is no more time to waste."

"The boy—"

"Leave him here, then!" Harold snapped, and Theodora could feel the Saxon's tension from a pace away. *My young knight is frightened,* she realized. *Veritably petrified with fear!*

"He need not have come," the Saxon continued angrily. "He will slow us in the chase."

"You were glad of his wit and company on the voyage from Constantinople," she replied carefully, "and although his skills are weak, he may still prove a boon. And he is the only one—"

Harold grunted dismissively. "Josephus has seen lights in the desert—men traveling by camel with hooded lanterns—and the night wind is lately filled with unclean voices."

The monk nodded gravely, white beard dusted with starlight. "Truth. The city is waking. We will leave soon."

"You are in danger?" Theodora rubbed her chin. "From phantoms?"

"The monks are wise to fear the ghosts of Petra," Harold muttered, slumping back into his cloak. "They have wicked teeth and cold, cold eyes."

Josephus nodded solemnly. "He speaks truth, sister. This is an evil place, and the dead do not rest easy on their stone beds."

Theodora turned to Harold. "What do we face when we go into the ruins? More than the Ismail'i and their human servants?"

"Aren't Sadir al-Sur and his laughing blade enough?" Harold growled. "Petra is long dead—filled with crypts and broken palaces—a bone-dry necropolis scattered beneath peaks like skulls."

"I see." Theodora felt her lips tighten in distaste. "And the raptor-faced priests? What of them? What of the cruel citizens? Did they flee? Perish in some cataclysm?"

The Saxon laughed bitterly. "Fallen back to the hell which first vomited them up, my lady. A doom swallowed them all, root and branch."

The nun turned to Josephus. "Father?"

"This may be so," the old Monophysite answered, but he sounded tentative. "Nothing stirs by day among the sepulchers save lizards and scorpions, but of late there is a . . . watchfulness. A sense of rising anger."

"Could it be Hasan the Younger and his agents? They have been at least a day's march ahead of us from the coast—they must have already entered the city."

The monk shrugged, and Harold fell silent again. Theodora stifled a sigh, feeling the night's chill seeping through her robes. "We leave at first light?"

"Earlier," the Saxon muttered, his long face entirely hidden in shadow. "We rise with the dawn wind."

The sun had yet to rise, and the three travelers moved in a deep, still darkness. The nun led, once more borrowing Athené's night-eyes to pick out the ancient path. Although little was visible in the gloom, Theodora knew Petra itself must lie just to their north. Crossing a streambed at the foot of the mountain, the nun felt a great, clammy cold wash around her, as though the corpse-breath of a multitude issued from the ruins.

"Sir Harold?" Davide's voice was barely more than a whisper. "Pray take no offense, but what desperate strait drew you to such an accursed place? I mean, before now . . ." The Italian's voice trailed away.

Harold did not answer, striding along behind the poet, one hand on the hilt of his sword. Theodora kept her peace, attention fixed on the path ahead, which now ran past tall rectangular blocks. *Tombs?* She wondered, eyeing their unnaturally smooth sides, barely touched by rain or wind. *Watchtowers?*

"There was a theft," the Saxon said suddenly, voice low. "A monk's caravan ambushed on the road from Sinai—a dozen Christian knights murdered—and something immeasurably precious stolen away. I was in Bethlehem and could not refuse the Patriarch my blade or service. Not when all Christendom stood in mortal peril." He shook his head ruefully. "A cruel chase followed, and many perils. Do not believe these lands are without threat, although they seem empty and dry. Five of us reached this place, coming from the east—there is a narrow gorge, tight and close, where the sun does not penetrate—and we found the way held against us by Crusader and Saracen alike."

Harold stopped. His broad hand drew the Italian to his side. "Do you see the pinnacle there? Rising against the stars like a knight's helm?"

"A doom swallowed them all, root and branch."

Davide nodded. The barren peak rose head and shoulders above the surrounding ridges.

"That is el-Madbah—the High Place of Sacrifice," the Saxon whispered, "and there the last of the Petrans offered worship to something cruel and ancient, a demon of the outer darkness. Seven hundred steps rise from foot to crown." Harold shifted, armor clinking softly. "Every one drenched in blood that night, with the sky rumbling and cracking, with a queer, hellish glare emanating from the mountain-top. . . . The Petrans, you see, were ruled by the last of a mighty pre-Adamite race—a king out of darkness, steeped in deviltry and wickedness of all kinds." Another bitter laugh escaped his lips, and Davide flinched at the sound.

"Yet . . . yet you won through, did you not? I mean—"

The Saxon leaned close, face tight with remembered pain. "At cost, poet, at cost! Only I survived, and only by the grace of . . ." He swallowed. The Saxons's face was a mask of grief. "Sometimes, even the damned may aid the living."

"Oh." Davide shivered, even with his pudgy frame wrapped in two borrowed cloaks. The poet leaned back against the side of the tower, and then flinched away as though burned. "I do not like this place," Davide muttered, rubbing his shoulder. "I feel sick."

Harold grunted in disdain and moved away, slipping a round shield onto his left arm and tightening the straps. "Do not mock him," Theodora snapped. Gleaming threads were beginning to shine upon the face of the block, and what they described turned her stomach. "We are not welcome here."

Without response, Harold brushed past the nun and up the path. Now, however, he held Wurmbiter by hilt and scabbard, ready to draw at an instant's notice.

By the time the sun was standing full in the sky, the nun's disquiet had only increased, and the sensation of wading in clammy, fetid grave-water had not abated. She raised her head, catching sight of Davide laboring along the path. Beyond him, the Saxon had halted, head

lifted. Summoning a fraction more strength, Theodora paced to his side.

Harold was considering the el-Madbah looming above them with a frown.

"There is a long stair," he said softly. The Saxon lifted his chin to indicate the mouth of a canyon clogged with tamarisk and stunted cedar just to their east. "Past many tombs and graven statues—it leads to the High Place and was little used before."

"And now?" Theodora eyed the road behind them. "The Ismail'i are lurking somewhere. . . ."

"Just beyond that hill," Harold said, pointing the other direction, "is the old city center and the likely camp of our old friend Hasan and his mad followers. Well away from the hidden path."

"Then lead on," the nun said, trying to summon a smile at the prospect.

"Divine Savior," Davide wheezed from behind her, "not more steps to climb!"

Not all the ascent proved to be age-worn steps hewn from the rock of the mountain. Indeed, a little more than halfway to the summit, the path turned back to the west on a sloping ledge wide enough for two men to walk abreast. Theodora breathed a little easier and picked up her pace to walk beside Harold.

The Saxon frowned at the nun. "You should take care, grandmoth—"

The path turned just then, opening out into a bowl-shaped cavity, almost a garden with yellowed grass underfoot and water spilling from the gaping mouth of an ancient lion statue. Two cedars rose over the tiny oasis, their roots deep in the rock, branches shading the spring.

Theodora's white eyebrows rose in surprise. "This is—"

A black-fletched arrow snapped past Harold's head and cracked wetly into the nun's breast. The old woman staggered, one hand batting weakly at the dun-colored shaft, and then she fell backwards, droplets of blood flying from the corner of her mouth.

Harold whirled, blade rasping free from its sheath, and caught sight of four men in black djellaba rushing toward him. Their scimitars and daggers glittered in the late afternoon sun. More arrows snapped past and there was a choked scream of pain as Davide was pricked in the arm.

The Saxon ignored the fat Italian's blubbering and shrugged the shield tight as he surged forward. The lead rafiq sprang lightly over an outthrust spur of rock, a wicked knife flicking away from his fingers. Harold batted the dart aside with his shield and hacked overhand at the Ismail'i. The Persian sprang to the side and cut sideways at the knight's left knee. The Saxon smashed his shield down, knocking the tip of the scimitar away and hurled his right shoulder into the man's chest.

Caught unawares by the charge, the Arab grunted breathlessly, and Harold ripped Wurmbiter back around, edge catching under the man's jaw and shearing the Ismail'i's head clean off with a jerk. A haze of red drifted in the air. The Saxon, face spotted crimson, charged over the fallen body and into the midst of the three rafiq bounding up to the attack.

A black-fletched arrow cracked wetly into the nun's breast.

At the edge of the path, Theodora's eyes blinked open. The nun twisted her head around to catch sight of an arrow lodged far too close to her heart. "Ahh," she gasped, "this bodes poor. . . ."

Harold rushed the nearest rafiq, slamming his shield into the man's whirling blade. The Ismail'i stumbled aside, foot turning awry on uneven ground. The Saxon threw a sharp backhand cut at the other two as they darted to his right. One ducked away. The other whipped his scimitar around to parry the knight's blow, and Wurmbiter cracked through the damascene steel with an angry shriek. The rafiq's eyes went wide as the diamond-shaped point of the elf-blade punched through his upper chest, splintering bone and tearing out through his back. The stricken Ismail'i shuddered, and Harold kicked the corpse free of the blade.

A sharp crack sounded as the middle rafiq lunged at the Saxon's exposed hip, and iron rings twisted around the point of his scimitar. A flash of cold flooded Harold's thigh and he grunted heavily, swinging around. The Ismail'i bounded back, blade slicked red, and easily avoided the longsword's wild sweep.

Theodora levered herself up and saw Davide huddled against the cliff, just out of sight of the attackers, his robes tangled with arrows.

"Do . . . something . . ." she hissed before the blood in her mouth made her choke.

Trembling from head to foot, the Italian nodded jerkily. Face pale and round as the full moon, he began to mutter. The words were unintelligible—Theodora caught the rasp of old Latin—and then he ducked around the corner.

The Saxon side-stepped, facing the last of the Ismail'i, shield ready with Wurmbiter's gore-streaked point drifting in the air. The Persian now had a long dagger in either hand, and he was very light on his feet, like wind rippling over high grass. Harold crabbed in, blade at the ready, trying to force the man onto broken ground.

Davide caught sight of the Saxon, then the Persian, and his fingers jerked into a sharp, complicated pattern—and a black-clad fist flashed out of nowhere and smashed into his nose. The pattern in the Italian's mind dissipated violently as one of the rafiq kicked him in the groin with a metal-shod boot. A wail choked in Davide's throat. The Ismail'i reversed the long knife in his hand with an effortless flip and smashed the balled hilt into the poet's temple.

The blow felled Davide like a sack of grain.

Theodora let an exhausted sigh escape her lips. *Poor boy. . . .* She tried to lift her own hand, but her fingers had gone numb—and the chill was creeping into her breast as well. "Harold—"

The rafiq attacked with a hoarse shout, knives whirling, and the Saxon fell back, boots skidding as he took two blows on the shield and parried another. He lunged, long blade flashing at the

man's head, but the Ismail'i leaned deftly away and then danced in, stabbing at the knight's exposed face. Harold sidestepped, feeling monstrously heavy and slow with the weight of armor on his back and shoulders, and hacked overhand, trying to catch the Persian's arm.

Wurmbiter rang with a high-pitched squeal as a lean saber dashed the longsword aside. Harold staggered, knocked off balance. He tried to twist around—and the rafiq with the two knives caught Wurmbiter's tip against his stomach, black-gloved hands seizing the blade. The Saxon caught sight of an ecstatic look shining on the Persian's face and then goggled in horror as the man forced himself forward, embracing the elf-steel grinding through his entrails.

"So do the faithful find paradise at the extremity of belief," said a rich voice just at Harold's ear.

The knight tried to turn, hand dragging on the longsword's hilt, and caught sight of a wry smile creasing a far-too-familiar face. Sadir al-Sur nodded in greeting, sharp eyes crinkling in delight. "I am saddened that we must forgo another lesson, barbarian."

Harold snarled, feeling Wurmbiter catch in the Persian's ribcage.

Sadir hooked a pointy-toed boot behind the Saxon's knee, sending the knight toppling back, and then—as Harold swayed, arms wild, at the edge of the cliff—struck him smartly in the chest with the saber. The water-steel blade bent into a graceful curve for an instant and then snapped straight again.

With a despairing cry Harold pitched backwards, twisted in the air, and plummeted down the side of the mountain.

Sadir leapt to the edge, boots light on the crumbling stone, in time to see the Saxon's body strike an outthrust wedge of rock, shield shattering, and then plunge through a canopy of greenish-gray branches and out of sight into the rocky canyon below.

"A pity." The Yemenite sea-captain sighed, stepping back. "He was so clumsy. Such a heavy weight of metal only slows a fighter down. The crossmen are such fools."

Sadir turned to account for the rest of the fray and found two of the rafiq bowmen binding the hands of the fat-faced Italian and another poking curiously at the crumpled, black- and gray-clad body of a tiny old woman.

The Saxon's body struck **an outthrust wedge of rock.**

"Is she dead?" The Yemenite asked, running his saber back into its sheath.

The Ismail'i nodded, spitting on the dead Christian priestess. "Cold as a stone, emir."

"And this one?" Al-Sur took Davide's sallow, clammy face between two fingers. "Will you live, little sorcerer?" The sailor smiled genially as the Italian blinked fearfully. "Just long enough to please lord Hasan, I think, just long enough. . . ."

The rafiq dragged Davide away and up the steps carved into the mountainside.

Sadir al-Sur took one last look around, grinned at the vast open panorama of the sky and jumbled mountains, and then bounded lightly across the stream, past the age-worn lion and into the shadow of the peak.

Far above, where the jagged precipice of the mountain ended in the long open plateau of the High Place, Hasan the Younger, the heir to all the power of the far-flung Ismail'i fraternity—a dark brotherhood whose daggers twisted fear into the hearts of kings and potentates from the Hindu Kush to Spain—laughed aloud, pleased beyond measure to see yet another of his enemies fall.

From the height, the bowl of Petra spread out below him, cupped fingers of stone holding the ruins of a mighty city studded with columned temples, grand houses and broad avenues. Hasan's half-lidded eyes drifted across the ancient rows of towers, monoliths, and roads marching away to the horizon; all ran unerringly toward the High Place, the monuments of the ancients revealing ley tracks radiating like the points of a Chin compass. Then he turned and stepped back from the edge of the cliff.

One of Hasan's agents, a camel merchant named Darazi, knelt beside a sandstone altar, nimble fingers assembling the bluish shards of a broken cup. The young lord stepped to the merchant's side, looking with interest upon the myriad silver bracelets, golden rings, and amulets—the dross which had hidden the Chalice of Life.

Darazi eased a rounded, nublike section into the rim of the cup with a gentle tap, and at last Hasan beheld the relic complete and whole.

"Well done," he whispered, a vast unquenchable joy welling up in his heart. "So very well done, my friend."

Darazi looked up, well-manicured beard split by a tight smile. "Thank you, my lord. We are ready to begin, I think. The sun has almost set."

Hasan nodded. Between them, the corpse of Nazir, last true kalif of Egypt and heir to the temporal power of the Ismail'i brotherhood, lay in state on the altar.

Theodora's robes rustled and twitched, and the tiny shape of little Athené crawled out, feathers ruffled and specked with drying blood. Disconsolate, the owl butted her head against the nun's sunken cheek and hooted softly. There was no response.

After hopping about for a moment and nudging a motionless hand, Athené twitched out her wings and took to the air. Uneasy in the strong golden light of late afternoon, the owl fluttered away from the ledge and then swept down through rocky spires and wind-sculpted crevices toward the canyon floor below.

Hasan looked up from tenderly straightening the grave-garments of the kalif to see the Italian shoved to his knees beside the altar. Davide wheezed sickly, face the color of spoiled porridge.

"Our missing Venetian," Hasan the Younger said in a pleased voice. "Look at

you—so deft with languages and ancient tongues—yet now no more than a side of meat, ready for the drawn knife! Well done, lord al-Sur. My compliments." The Ismail'i nodded genially to Sadir and tossed the sailor a kidskin bag. "And the others?"

"The Greek spy lies dead on the path, ready for the crows to peck out her eyes," the Yemenite responded, weighing the packet of coins with a frown, "and the slow-footed Frank pitched headlong down the cliffside."

"Very satisfactory," Hasan said. He smiled down at Davide in a predatory way. "Our most heartfelt gratitude will be extended to the kalif in Baghdad for lending you to us. Even this worthless flesh-sack is welcome. We have a pressing need for him tonight."

The Italian quailed, mind numbed with fear. A dreadful chill seemed to seep into his skin from the air. The Ismail'i's words were distant and vague, hidden behind a rising wall of terror brought on by the uncanny sensation of clawed fingers scrabbling at his legs, as though the rock itself was seeking to drag him into a tomblike embrace.

Hasan's face blocked out the sky, eyes bright, and very faintly Davide heard the man say, "Even the blood of such a frail sorcerer as yourself will serve to hasten the passage of our lord back into the land of the living, for he will greatly thirst upon his resurrection. . . ."

All Davide could see were the indistinct shapes of phantoms—cold-eyed, with harsh, angular faces—curdling out of the sky around the Persian's head, and all he could hear were cruel voices whispering on the uneasy air.

Down in the canyon below, gray juniper leaves rattled and bent aside. Harold Godwinson crawled out of the thicket, nose seeping blood, one eye mashed closed, left arm twisted behind him at an unnatural angle, the ruins of his shield digging into torn flesh. Gasping in bone-deep pain, he clawed across the rocks, pulling himself into a shallow overhang.

Slumped against a rock wall, the Saxon's breath came in rasping bursts as damaged lungs tried to keep life in his shattered body. One working hand fumbled at his throat, tearing aside the remains of a leather collar. Nearly fainting with effort, Harold dug out a disc of sapphire-colored glass. The Saxon pressed the fragment to his lips, croaking out a prayer: "For am nedfere, naeni wyr e, ances snotera, onne him earf sy. . . ."

A sullen light stabbed from behind his fingers. Harold groaned, stiffening, feeling a clammy prickling wash across his flesh. His eyes rolled back, hand still tight on the disc, and the power released from the Chalice piece sealed up the cuts on his face, restored sight to his crushed eye and began suffusing his broken limbs with strength once more.

The Saxon pressed the fragment to his lips, croaking out a prayer.

"Gather, my faithful," Hasan called out, his voice echoing in the wind gusting across the High Place. The sun was a wavering red orb hanging balefully over the eastern desert. All the land below the mountain was filled with darkness, and the boulders strewn down the slopes of the al-Madbah were glowing a deep, dark red in the twilight, as though a sea of blood had broken against the cliffs.

Twenty rafiq knelt on the plaza. Hasan himself stood on the steps of the altar, a bare knife gentle in his hands. Nazir's waxy face shimmered in wavering torchlight as Darazi emerged from the dimness with the Chalice in both hands. The cup—whole once more, without even a crack showing—was filled with sunset. Carefully, the merchant knelt beside the huddled, forlorn shape of Davide.

The Italian flinched as Hasan seized his ragged hair and bent back the poet's neck.

"Begin," the Ismail'i lord commanded, turning depthless eyes upon the men assembled below him. "Speak you the words. . . ."

The rafiq began to chant; a stumbling, difficult recitation. The words were not Arabic or any tongue known to the Prophet, and they fell heavily on the ear.

The wind whistled down to a bare eddy. The torches leapt higher. The chant strengthened too, as ill-remembered words forced themselves from unwilling throats. Hasan stiffened, feeling a cold draft against his face. His eyes darted to the torches, but they were unwavering, unbent.

Davide flinched, but Hasan had yet to lay the knife upon him.

"Ahhh. . . ." Darkness grew outside the circle, and the stars began to dim. "Now we begin," the Ismail'l lord proclaimed in an eager voice as he bent over the Italian, ebon knife in hand.

Feet dragging, throat tight with dread, Harold Godwinson stepped around the corner of the mountain. From high above, the sound of unclean voices prickled his neck and turned his guts to ice. Theodora still lay sprawled on the stones, but now a slim figure bent over her, little Athené fluttering in anxious circles around glossy black hair.

The knight stopped dead, face ghastly in the faint residue of sunset. The figure's head lifted. Pale luminous eyes met his, and a thin-lipped mouth twisted in disgust.

"My lady Illé," Harold whispered. He began to inch back down the stairs.

"So . . . you do remember me." The woman rose, ancient robes draping long on a lithe figure. Wan silver bracelets and rings of gold adorned her wrists and fingers. High cheekbones framed enormous eyes and a narrow nose. "Young Duzares is in my garden again, smelling of blood, iron, and death." Her voice was bitter. "Many oaths you swore, bull of summer, first among them never to bring ruin upon my city again."

"I did not bring this upon you!" Harold exclaimed. "The men on the mountaintop are Ismail'i's—servants of Alamut and the Old Man—they are up to wickedness and deviltry." His hand lifted, indicating Theodora. "We sought to stop these

brigands before they came this far . . . but we were too late."

Hissing angrily, Illé glided toward the knight. Harold shrank back, not even bothering to reach for the empty scabbard at his side.

"I do not care whence came these wailing dogs," the woman rasped, "only to be left in solitude! Their yelping roused me from needful sleep!"

Her fingers gouged cruelly into the side of his face, pinning the Saxon's head to the cliff.

"You left me bereft and alone, husband murdered, people scattered—so many promises broken! Did you find our gay life among the tombs and coffins wearying? Did our revels not please?"

Harold shuddered in remembered horror, but despite the talons digging into his neck, shook his head. "No. I could not bear them, nor this place. . . ."

"Ha!" Illé jerked away, face in shadow. "Or my company."

The Saxon fell silent, unable to speak. Then he felt something brush his hair and Athené landed on his shoulder, claws digging into the leather hauberk. Anxious, the owl nipped at his ear.

"Ow! My lady?" Wincing, the Saxon gentled the bird onto his forearm. "Give me leave enough to see to the body of my friend. Then do with me as you will."

Illé cast a cold eye upon him, drawing the ragged mantle around her shoulders tight. "She is past your care, outlander . . . but there are tombs aplenty to hold her old bones."

Harold edged past the Petran woman and knelt beside the little nun. His blunt fingers checked her neck, wrist, and brow. *Grandmother is so cold,* he thought, feeling crippling pain twist his heart. Another comrade consumed by this . . . place. There was faint movement at her throat, and her wrinkled old skin was not yet leaden with death. Harold swallowed, eyeing lady Illé, who had paced angrily to the foot of the winding stair.

"That chant is familiar . . ." The Petran said slowly, head cocked as she listened to the night. "What are these dogs about, my young bull? Who taught them such ancient words?"

The Saxon pressed the sapphire disc against Theodora's brow. "They have gathered the remnants of the Chalice of Life," Harold said, looking over his shoulder. "It must be known to you. Long ago it was wrought by Petran hands and—"

"The covenant of the Seven Princes?" Illé spun, surprised. "The Cup Everflowing?"

"Yes," Harold nodded, heart sinking as the disc lay inert beneath his fingers. "They've brought the body of their high priest, stolen from their enemies and—"

In a stride, Illé was over him, talon-like fingers seizing his neck. Harold cried out, hands scrabbling to break her grip, but then a paralysis crept over him, rendering him helpless.

"Well, well," Illé said, voice icy once more. There was a brief flicker of disgust as she looked from the nun to Harold and back again. "This ancient is far too weak for your will to rouse, but now I ken why you fled my embrace, fled the city, abandoned your companions to certain death . . . all for a breath of eternity."

The Petran woman plucked the disc from Theodora's brow. She smiled toothily and held up the fragment of glass. At her touch, it began to glow faintly. "The infidels on the summit have the rest of this? The cup itself? They mean to return their prophet to breathing life?"

"Once, you promised to stay with me forever . . ."

Amused, she held the disc to one eye, frail-looking face lit by the cool glow. "The body will move, I'm sure, but without restraining the blood. A true spirit will not find residence in its old haunt! That will be a delightful scene." Her lips twitched.

"I . . ." Harold struggled with numb, lifeless lips, trying to speak. "Free me, my lady, and I will fetch you back the rest of the Cup. For our lives, I will pledge this. Save my companion, oh Queen, and the Cup shall be yours."

Now the woman stirred and leaned close, her breath hot on his neck. "And you? Once you promised to stay with me forever . . . will you keep your word, sir knight, or flee again?"

"I will stay." Harold managed, feeling an iron band tighten around his heart. "But you must help me now."

For a long moment, she looked down at him, the disc shining a steady azure in her fingers, the night sky a velvet sheet behind her angular head. "Rise," she said, and Harold felt the strange lassitude fade.

He scrambled up blind as Illé covered the disc with both hands.

"Dare we a light?" The Saxon asked quietly, searching on hands and knees for the corpse of the black-gloved rafiq. *It must lie just . . .* His outstretched fingers touched Wurmbiter's hilt and Harold felt vast relief. "The way up is steep. . . .

There was breathy laughter in the darkness. "There is no time to labor up five hundred steps—and the passage of obelisks will be guarded. Take hold."

"What?" Harold rose, sliding Wurmbiter into its scabbard. "You—"

"Take hold!" The woman hissed, lifting her arms to the sky. The Saxon could hear the trill of Athené fluttering above their heads. "Come now, young Duzares, we must hurry!"

Taking a queasy breath, the knight wrapped both arms around her shoulders and Illé grunted at the weight. Athené swooped past soundlessly, visible only as a white flash as the owl turned, eyes gleaming in starlight.

"We go," the Petran woman hissed, moving ponderously to the base of the cliff. There was a scraping sound and then the squeal of sandstone yielding to something harder than iron. The Saxon felt her muscles bunch—*Manwys' bones, she is strong!*—and then Illé extended an arm, talons digging into sandstone, and surged up the face of the cliff. Harold blinked, stunned, and then closed his eyes tight, heart thudding as she climbed, sinewy arms tight with strain and her fingers digging into cracks and crevices too small for the human eye to see. . . .

On the summit, the wailing chant reached a crescendo and the rafiq, their throats raw from the unaccustomed sound, fell silent. At the altar, Darazi placed the Chalice just at the corpse's head, and Hasan—fingers still tight in Davide's hair—drew the ebon blade slowly across sunburned skin. The Italian moaned, feeling a wet stripe open at his throat. The Ismail'i lord raised the blade, feeling the night air swirl around his arm, the chittering sound of cicadas and crickets filling the darkness.

"Come, servants of the outer void!" He cried into the starless night. "Bring me the lord of the Chosen, bring me Nazir the Blessed, kalif of the Faithful, son of Fatima, son of Ali. Bring him!"

Hasan laid the blade—now shining clean as though unused—against Davide's bloody neck. Below the dais, the rafiq began to recite again, louder and wilder. Darazi and Hasan began a counter-chant, this one low and ominous, their words ancient and dead when the ruined city below was at the height of its power.

At the very edge of the torchlight, Sadir al-Sur stood at the top of a ramp leading down the mountain, eyes wary and fingers light on the hilt of his saber. Only the flare of his nostrils and the quick way his gaze darted from the altar to the sky to the chanting men betrayed a deep and growing unease.

My master the kalif of Baghdad has many enemies, the sailor thought, *but the cost of gaining alliance with these Persian curs seems to grow with every passing mo—* He tensed, keen eyes catching sight of unexpected movement behind the two men on the altar. "What is—"

Illé spidered up over the edge of the cliff, breath harsh with effort, and Harold scrambled onto the summit. Wurmbiter rasped into a two-handed grip as the Saxon bounded up the stepped dais of the altar.

In the same moment, Hasan ripped his knife across the Italian's throat, drawing a gargling cry, and the merchant caught a stream of fresh crimson in the Cup. The Ismail'i lord shouted the last words of the invocation, snatching the Chalice away from Darazi and thrusting it toward the pitch-black sky. The goblet flared blue-white, throwing long shadows across the plaza. In the glare, a numberless host of shining feral eyes and half-seen ghostly bodies swirling above the mountaintop was revealed.

The camel-merchant stepped back, hands raised in supplication, and Harold hewed the man's head from his shoulders with a savage blow. The body toppled forward, gouting blood onto Nazir's corpse, and the Saxon howled a war-cry, lunging for Hasan and the Chalice.

The youth sprang back, blood spilling from the cup.

With an echoing shriek, the spirits whirled down, crowding around the merchant's body, glistening fangs tearing at his flesh, long black tongues licking at the spilt blood.

Illé shrugged aside her fatigue, face tight, and lightning cracked from her outstretched hand, incinerating three of the rafiq as they charged up the steps toward Harold. The Saxon leapt into their midst, Wurmbiter slashing in a figure-eight and two more toppled, skulls crushed or cloven open. Behind his minions, Hasan grappled with the blood-slicked Chalice, which kept squirming out of his fingers.

Tiny, wraithlike shapes swarmed like moths on the blood.

At the top of the ramp, Sadir al-Sur laughed in delight, blood racing in anticipation of a heroic fray. He drew his saber with a ringing flourish and stepped forward, a lively grin splitting his face, just as a claw-like hand seized his sleeve.

"A moment, good captain," croaked an old voice.

On the dais, Davide rolled heavily to one side, fingers jammed against his wounded throat, and slid gracelessly from the altar. Stone cracked against his knees, but he did not notice the pain. Instead, he tried to breathe and coughed crimson onto the steps. Immediately, tiny wraithlike shapes—desiccated men and women and half-human things—swarmed like moths onto the blood. Sickened, the Italian scrambled away, heedless of a pit yawning directly in front of him.

Harold roared, wielding his blade two-handed, and the rafiqs circled, stabbing and leaping, eyes shining madly in the glare of the Chalice. A dagger slashed his bicep, but the Saxon bellowed, flinging the man aside, and Wurmbiter sheared through another's leg, sending the assassin sprawling. The others sprang back, cursing him in many tongues.

Beyond them, Hasan recaptured the gory Chalice and shrouded the radiant cup in his cloak.

Darkness swept in, and now the hovering cloud of spirits raised a hollow, chilling laughter.

Harold backpedaled cautiously, the elf-blade glowing like a fallen star. The rafiq sidled forward, leading with long knives and hooked blades. The Saxon feinted at one, but the man skipped back out of reach.

"My lady!" He cried, casting about for the Petran woman.

An echoing crack of lightning answered as the Queen stumbled onto the plaza. Another of the rafiq shrieked hideously, suddenly engulfed in flame. Harold rushed to her side, swinging round to cover her flank, and caught sight of a figure illuminated by the altar-torches.

Hasan crouched over the kalif, bare arm outstretched, the black knife wicking a fresh, sanguinary stream into the robe-shrouded Chalice.

"No!" The Saxon bellowed, bounding up the steps.

The Ismail'i lord upended the cup, sending ruby fluid spilling across the corpse. The goblet's brilliant radiance wicked out. Hasan shouted in exaltation as a hot wind grew up around the altar.

Harold swung around the long stone block, throwing a sideways cut at the youth's head. At the same moment, the

corpse of Darazi lurched up, brittle and dry as dust. Wurmbiter chunked solidly into the dead merchant's shoulder-joint, and the knight jerked back in surprise. Claw-like hands lunged at his throat, and Harold cursed, lashing out with the blade. Decaying arms flew in opposite directions.

"Beware, my bull, something foul is at work here!" Illé fell back up the steps, long teeth bared in a snarl. She lurched aside as the bodies sprawled on the dais stirred, snatching at her bare feet.

Harold smashed one skull with his boot, then pinned the other with Wurmbiter. From the corner of his eye, the whole plateau seemed to stir with uneasy life. Illé looked ghastly, hands trembling, barely able to stand. The still-living rafiq had scattered, fleeing in terror.

"Fire," he gasped, "we need fire!"

Puzzled, Hasan drew back from the altar. In the ragged torchlight, dozens of translucent shapes swarmed around the kalif, clawing and shrieking in faint voices, fighting to enter the body.

"My lord? Where art thou?" The youth batted at the loathsome things and gasped in pain as his fingers frosted with ice. The spirit faces twisted around, laughing in mockery. Only one of them—a pitiful, emaciated creature—still tried to climb over the others, weak hands reaching for the dead face.

"Lord Nazir!" Hasan was horrified to recognize the kalif's spirit. "How you have fallen. . . ." Then something came seeping up out of the rusty stone—a thin-faced apparition of baleful countenance, a hawk-faced lord still radiating strength, even in death. It fell upon the lesser spirits, rending and tearing, and they scattered in terror.

Hasan wrenched his attention away from the kalif's agonized expression, eyes falling upon the Chalice. A tiny ghost was inside the cup, snuffling about for blood, and the Ismail'i realized the spirit was *pressing its hands against the glass.*

A queer, wavering groan suddenly issued from the mouth of the corpse, and it shuddered from head to toe. The baleful spirit was gone, but Nazir remained, searching desperately for refuge.

Too late, Hasan realized, face grim. He scooped up the Chalice and the wisp of Nazir in one smooth motion. Shaking a cloud of greedy, suckling ghosts from his wounded arm, the youth jammed his bleeding hand over the mouth of the cup.

"In me, my lord, be reborn!" He cried out and lifted the cup to his lips, gagging down the struggling, half-born spirit and its bloody matrix in one convulsive swallow. The fluid burned his throat like acid, and Hasan screamed, feeling something sharp tear into his chest.

At the same moment, the **corpse of Darazi lurched up.**

The undead rafiq shambled forward, their numbers multiplied by a myriad of half-seen forms. Harold drew Illé behind him and slashed Wurmbiter in a wide circle. The keen light in the metal drove the shades back for an instant, but then they crept forward again.

"Can you summon fire?" The Saxon hissed at the Petran woman. "Like your thunderbolt?"

"Were I fresh," she gasped, clinging weakly to his back. "I'm almost spent. . ."

With a gargling cry, one of the reborn rafiq rushed the knight, one arm missing, its good hand clutching a scimitar. Harold stepped in, batted the descending blade aside and then hacked downwards with all his remaining strength. The corpse shattered, cut in twain, spilling decaying entrails and dusty fluid.

Grunting, Harold sprang back, hacking at an indistinct shape, but it yielded like vapor before his blade, and an icy, armored claw tore at the ring-mail on his forearm, shattering the iron like cheap pottery.

"Ware!" The Saxon bellowed, springing back. More of the enemy closed in and one of the undead rafiq snatched up a dart from the ground.

Out of the corner of his eye, Harold saw Illé grimace as her hands twisted into a complex pattern. A hot white spark flared up, and he threw himself to the side, crashing through ranks of bitterly cold phantoms.

An armored specter lunged toward the Petran woman, two pale flames burning beneath a horsetail plume, and Illé barked a Word. The spark leapt from her moving hands, spearing the spectral warrior and ripping through a dozen more of the ghastly shapes behind him. With a fading cry, they crumpled, fragile spirits shattered. The burning mote flew out into the darkness, briefly silhouetting the warren of canyons below the peak and then shattered on a sandstone spire a mile or more away. Rock splintered with a roar and huge slabs of stone peeled away from the peak, crashing down into the ravines below in a billowing cloud of dust.

"Ahh!"

The Queen grunted in shock, snarl fading. She looked down. A black dart jutted from her belly, seeping fresh scarlet.

Harold caught Illé as she fell, eyes rolling back into her head, the blue disk falling from her strengthless hand.

"My lady?" She seemed feather-light in his arms, and only a bare flutter of breath moved her lips. "Illé?"

A long gargling moan answered the knight. Harold swallowed, feeling the air chill on the back of his neck. Slowly, he turned. A sound like numberless flies buzzing and squirming in an abattoir assailed his ears.

Hasan had disappeared, but Nazir's corpse had quickened to dreadful life. It levered itself up, a bubbling hiss erupting from blackened teeth. Taloned hands tore the ill-fitting vestments away, and the Saxon felt faint, seeing a withered heart beating strongly in the sunken chest. Papery skin rustled on bone and the kalif stepped down onto the dais.

"Christ Protector!" Harold shouted, feeling soul-deep revulsion fire his heart, filling his exhausted limbs with new strength. "Begone from God's sight!"

He took the steps in a single bound, Wurmbiter whirling in a tight arc, aiming to cleave the hideous wight's head from shoulders in a single blow.

The blade struck thin air with a ringing sound and held fast. Harold staggered, jolted from crown to foot.

The corpse, eyes burning a sulfurous green, drew back a decaying hand and smashed the knight to the ground. Wurmbiter flew from the Saxon's hand and clattered across the pavement. Harold's head rang like a gong and he forced himself up, groping for a weapon.

"What delight is this?" The corpse's words were slurred by the creak of withered muscle against corroded bone. "Can fate be so kind? Do the gods smile upon me once more? The crude, raw barbarian who cast me into the abyss is at my feet again!"

The Saxon gaped, scrabbling back from the apparition. The face of the corpse was changing, subtly shifting, the faint outlines of rich robes and an ornamented breastplate beginning to obscure the tattered, mummified flesh.

"Ul-Mejid?" Harold whispered, mind foundering at the prospect. "But . . . but . . . you went into the fire!"

"I did," the ancient wizard croaked, limping forward. "Betrayed by my own wife and caught unawares by your stupid, heedless bravery!" A hand—almost solid and adorned with heavy rings—seized Harold's mailed shirt. Iron popped and tore like paper. Corpse muscles heaved the knight from his feet, and Harold cried out in fear, shaken like a rag doll.

"But you are alone now, barbarian," the last king of Petra crowed, "and your luck ends!"

A clenched fist smashed into Harold's face, splintering his nose and splitting his cheekbone. Stunned, the Saxon felt another blow grind iron rings into his chest, ribs cracking. Ul-Mejid laughed hollowly and flung him away. The knight crashed into the raised lip at the edge of the plaza, unable to move, breath shuddering in harsh bursts. *No . . . chalice this time. . . .* The feeble thought fled as black unconsciousness washed over him.

The corpse-king stalked toward the fallen Saxon, but something far more interesting lay in his path. Ghostly pupils blinked, empty eye sockets limned with flame, and then Ul-Mejid knelt curiously beside the body of lady Illé.

"You are here too?" He whispered sadly, a dead hand gentle on her brow. The Petran lord glared spitefully at the fallen knight. "Then he remained at your side. Did you find succor for our people in him? Did your magic surpass mine, at last? Does our city live?"

The woman could not answer, lips parted slightly in death, her body still and cold.

"Ah, my beautiful peregrine . . . I am too late." Ul-Mejid rose, joints creaking, and turned slowly, mournfully surveying the High Place. Sightless eyes fell upon something that shone in the darkness like the rising sun. "What doom is this that brings the sacred sign of our noble house before my—"

"The barbarian who cast me into the abyss is at my feet again."

The wizard stopped, gaze falling to the mummified body he inhabited, and then his eyes snapped back up, blazing with wonder. "The Chalice of Life! By the Lords of the Heavens, my love, our city can rise again!"

He stooped, searching about on the stones. Something fluttered pale and iridescent, and claw-like fingers snatched up Illé's spirit, still wandering between life and death. The wizard smiled—his dead lips stretching back from rotting teeth. "Ah, my treacherous love . . . now we will find our immortality at last!"

Ul-Mejid limped to the base of the altar with the woman in his arms. A great host of spirits gathered as he approached, sightless eyes fixed upon the risen king. The wizard felt hope kindle in his desiccated breast. Many of the glimmering phantoms bore the visage of men and women he had known in life—potent sorcerers, priests, artists, craftsmen—all the sinews of a reborn city, waiting for the power of the Chalice to fill them with life.

"Stand aside!" He commanded. "Let us pass, and you shall all rise again to walk beneath the sun!"

There was an answering susurration of mingled hope and despair. The phantoms drew back, a subtly shifting tide of half-seen images and fleeting glimpses. Ul-Mejid laughed, triumphant, and strode up the steps to lay his beloved upon the cradle of rebirth.

The altar was not empty. A tattered, bloody old woman climbed stiffly onto the stone block, an iron-headed cane tucked under one thin arm. The heavy glass of the Chalice filled one hand, and the other beckoned at the starless sky.

"Swiftly now, you little night-rat!" Theodora shouted, voice still thick with pain. Her torso was tightly bound with bandages.

Athené darted down out of the darkness, a glittering disc in her claws, and dropped the lid daintily into the nun's hand. Ul-Mejid hissed in rage, but paused just the tiniest moment to lay Illé down upon the stones.

Theodora's voice boomed, invoking great Words, the Chalice in one hand, and the disc in the other. Howling winds stormed up out of the canyons at the base of the mountain. Lightning flickered and stabbed, shining among the rocks and flashing in the doorways of half-buried temples. A torrent of air shrieked into the cavity between her hands. The risen dead still in motion on the plateau of the High Place staggered, spirits wrenched free, and collapsed into lifelessness once more.

"No! Beloved!" Ul-Mejid staggered forward, clutching wildly at Illé's spirit as she whipped away on the irresistible wind. For an instant the Queen hung in the air, struggling against the racing vortex, looking back at her King with deathless eyes and then—she was gone. Countless spirits shrieked past, voices raised in lamentation, drawn into the Chalice in a stream of flickering light.

The nun's voice continued to bell out, ringing against the black vault of heaven and echoing back from the jagged spires and crumbling mountains, speaking the Words inscribed into the lip of the Cup Everflowing, summoning all the dead unto their final rest.

The wizard staggered, fighting the gale clawing at his dead flesh. "I will not yield," he bellowed into the storm, "I will not!"

His right claw flexed, his agile mind forced an unnatural pattern upon the waking world.

A bolt of fire roared forth, spearing through the whirling dust and helpless spirits. Theodora screamed, engulfed in flame, her tiny body smashed back from the altar and flung upon the rocky shelf behind the sacred dais. She rolled, batting at tongues of fire leaping on her robes. The Chalice bounced away, unbreakable once more, and spun out of sight. The disc clattered across the rocks, spinning toward the edge of the cliff.

"Uhhh. . . ." Hasan the Younger gagged violently, black fluid boiling from his mouth. His eyes, now a queer yellow, rolled wildly. He spat, trying to clear his throat, and began crawling toward the two obelisks at the northern end of the High Place, where a stepped ramp led down to a saddle and the valley below. "Ghhh. . . ."

The Chalice tipped over the edge of an open pit and clattered across the floor of the ancient reservoir. The cup rolled to a halt at the feet of the poet Davide, who had been cowering in the dry pool, hoping the screams, howls, and crack of lightning would pass. Now he heard the unexpected rattling of glass on stone and raised his head. Before him, gleaming softly in the darkness, lay a goblet circumscribed with lines of radiant letters.

Above him, the ferocious winds summoned up by the nun were racing this way and that, twisting a wailing host of spirits across the sky.

"What–" The poet eased himself out of the corner and took up the cup. "I know this script," he murmured, blunt fingers tracing the harsh, angular letters. "Old Nabatean . . . Theodora had a fragment of this verse on a bit of paper." He turned the chalice, licking his lips, feeling a familiar sensation grow in his mind. "My power returns? This must be the whole of the thing, of which Arda's ring was such a small fraction!"

His thumb came to rest on a raised nubbin on the lip of the cup. "A lid, there is a lid. . . ."

The thing was burning in his vision, filling the world, and he could see a ghostly image of it complete and whole.

"Invicte!" He murmured, forcing himself to his feet. Davide's voice grew stronger. "To me!"

Bouncing to the edge of the cliff, the disc wobbled side to side and then lifted into the air, a shining blue spark.

"To me!"

The body of Hasan crawled onto the ramp at the edge of the plateau, nearly blind, and collapsed with a groan.

"My lord," Sadir al-Sur said gently, leaning over the Ismail'i. "You do not look well."

"I am risen.
I am
beyond death."

"Who . . . who is there?" The youth groped in darkness, trying to find some purchase.

"A friend," said the sailor, reaching down to lift up the young man with ancient eyes. "Come, I will take you to safety. My master will take good care of you."

"I am risen," Nazir whispered, as he was carried away. "I am beyond death . . . a prophet who has looked upon paradise. . . ."

Ul-Mejid heaved his decaying torso onto the edge of the altar and looked down upon the poet. "Fool!" He shouted, wrenching one leg–the bones had snapped, being so brittle from years hidden in the Egyptian desert–around the corner by main strength. "Give me–"

The blue disc blurred past and smacked into the Italian's outstretched hand.

Davide, eyes shut tight, shouted the last stanza of the invocation. Instantly, the aimless winds surging and boiling around the peak stiffened with a deep basso roar.

"Die!" The wizard howled in despair, taloned fingertip slashing the air, marking a dreadful Sign. A jagged rent erupted in the air, spilling a queasy black void–

The iron-shod head of Theodora's cane smashed into Ul-Mejid's skull, shattering bone and sending the cranium flying.

"You die," the nun hissed between gritted teeth, kicking the decaying corpse of the kalif Nazir down the steps, "and stay dead until the Lord calls for you!"

Davide slammed the disc into the mouth of the Chalice as the last of the spirit wind howled down to nothing, a tiny vortex raging in sapphire. The last of his Words rang in the air, a clear singing bell, and then everything fell silent and utterly dark.

Theodora slumped against the bloodstained altar, her own heartbeat hammering in her ears.

To the east, a single star began to shine through the murk . . . and then another . . . and another.

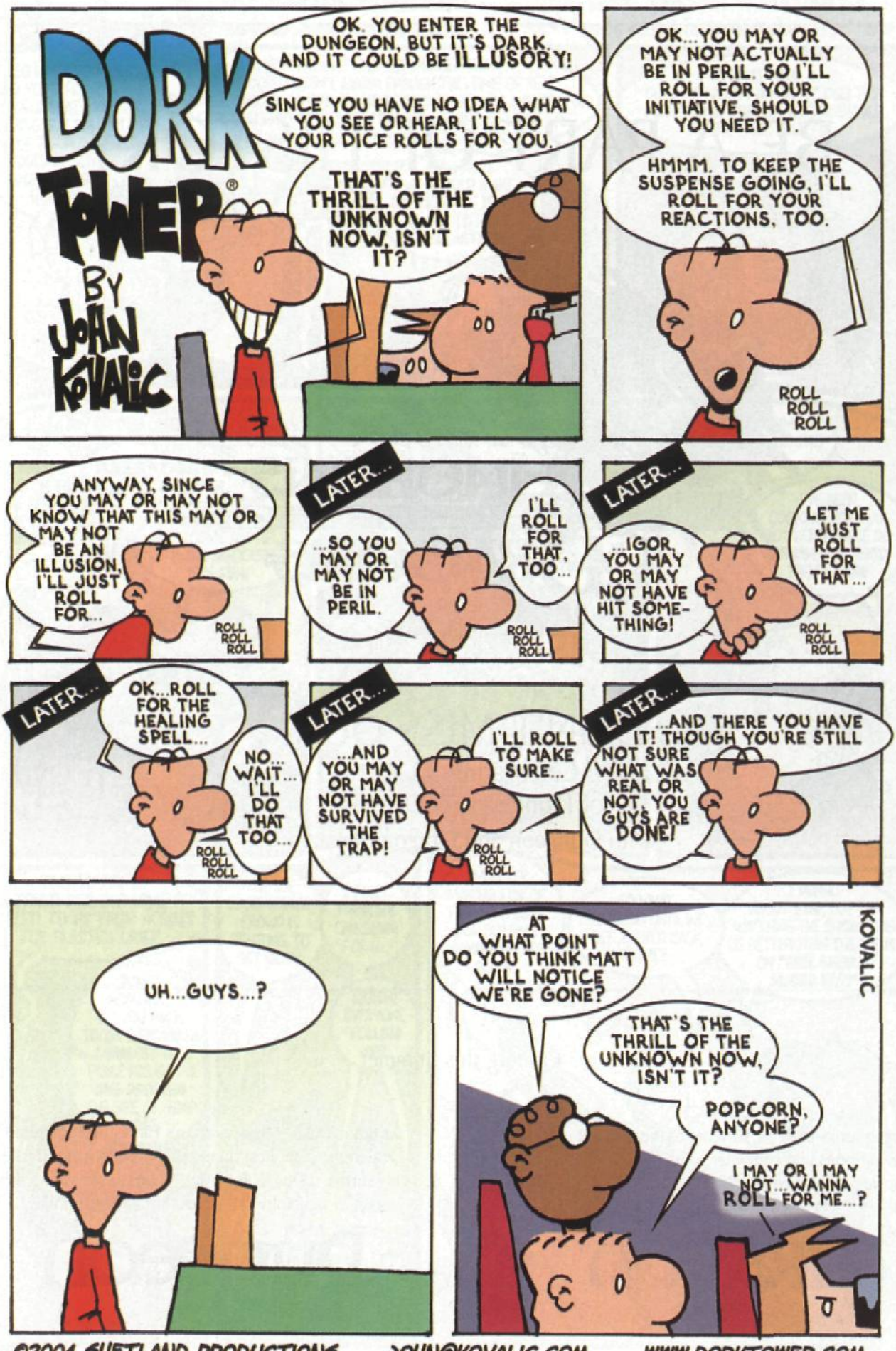
"Oh," the nun hissed, feeling her entire body beginning to throb "That hurts." D

Nodwick

by Aaron Williams
www.nodwick.com

Que sera, Sahara: What will be, gets sand in your shorts.

SO WHEN YOU SAID YOU'D FOUND A WORLD THAT WAS NOTHING BUT BEACH, I KIND OF FIGURED THERE WOULD BE SOME OCEAN TO GO WITH IT.
I'M NOT THE ONE WHO COMPLAINED THAT OUR OWN WORLD WASN'T WARM ENOUGH THIS TIME OF YEAR AND SAID WE SHOULD GO OFF-PLANE. BESIDES, THERE WAS A GLITCH IN THE GATE SPELL, SO WE'RE A FEW DIMENSIONS OFF. AT LEAST THE SPELL WILL PULL US HOME IN ABOUT A WEEK.
NOW, NOW. WE SHOULD MAKE THE MOST OF IT. WHO WANTS TO MAKE SANDCASTLES?
WE DON'T NEED AN OCEAN, BECAUSE I BROUGHT ONE! THIS DECANTER OF ENDLESS WATER SHOULD DO THE TRICK JUST FINE.
A DAY OR TWO LATER...
THANK GOODNESS I GOT BACK TO SHORE BEFORE THE TIDE CAME IN.
SHUT UP. THIS PLACE IS SUCKING UP WATER LIKE A SPONGE.
WHY DON'T YOU GUYS COME AND HELP WITH THE SANDCASTLE? IT'S FUN!
WE SEE YOU HAVE FOUND A NEW SOURCE OF WATER.
MUD, REALLY.
WE WOULD ASK THAT YOU GIVE IT OVER TO US. WE ARE PRESERVERS.
NOT RIGHT NOW. WE HOPE TO GO SWIMMING. WE ARE VACATIONERS.
MY TRIBE CLAIMS THESE WASTES AND THIS NEW OASIS.
I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU! DO YOUR PEOPLE DO LUAUS? I'VE HEARD THEY'RE FUN!
THIS WATER IS DESTINED FOR OUR HIVE. IT CALLED TO US FROM ACROSS THE BLASTED LANDS.
DANG! NODWICK? DID YOU PACK THOSE CITRONELLA CANDLES? THIS PLACE HAS GOT A BUG PROBLEM THE SIZE OF YOUR NOSE.
THE 'WE WANT WA-WA' CROWD IS STARTING TO GET UGLY.
I DON'T THINK WE CAN SWIM FOR IT...
QUICK! EVERYONE FOLLOW ME!
I'M NEVER MAKING FUN OF PIFFANY'S LOVE FOR BUILDING SAND CASTLES AGAIN.
SO WHAT DO WE DO UNTIL WE GET ZAPPED BACK HOME?
I DUNNO ABOUT YOU, BUT I'M WATCHING THE SHOW! THIS IS BETTER THAN THE ARENA ON "FREE SHORT-SWORD DAY!"


DORK TOWER®
BY JOHN KOVALIC
OK. YOU ENTER THE DUNGEON, BUT IT'S DARK, AND IT COULD BE ILLUSORY!
SINCE YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU SEE OR HEAR, I'LL DO YOUR DICE ROLLS FOR YOU.
THAT'S THE THRILL OF THE UNKNOWN NOW, ISN'T IT?
OK...YOU MAY OR MAY NOT ACTUALLY BE IN PERIL. SO I'LL ROLL FOR YOUR INITIATIVE, SHOULD YOU NEED IT.
HMMM. TO KEEP THE SUSPENSE GOING, I'LL ROLL FOR YOUR REACTIONS, TOO.
ROLL ROLL ROLL
ANYWAY, SINCE YOU MAY OR MAY NOT KNOW THAT THIS MAY OR MAY NOT BE AN ILLUSION, I'LL JUST ROLL FOR...
ROLL ROLL ROLL
LATER...
...SO YOU MAY OR MAY NOT BE IN PERIL.
I'LL ROLL FOR THAT, TOO...
ROLL ROLL ROLL
LATER...
...IGOR, YOU MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE HIT SOMETHING!
LET ME JUST ROLL FOR THAT...
ROLL ROLL ROLL
LATER...
OK...ROLL FOR THE HEALING SPELL...
NO... WAIT... I'LL DO THAT TOO...
ROLL ROLL ROLL
LATER...
...AND YOU MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE SURVIVED THE TRAP!
I'LL ROLL TO MAKE SURE...
ROLL ROLL ROLL
LATER...
...AND THERE YOU HAVE IT! THOUGH YOU'RE STILL NOT SURE WHAT WAS REAL OR NOT, YOU GUYS ARE DONE!
UH...GUYS...?
AT WHAT POINT DO YOU THINK MATT WILL NOTICE WE'RE GONE?
THAT'S THE THRILL OF THE UNKNOWN NOW, ISN'T IT?
POPCORN, ANYONE?
I MAY OR I MAY NOT... WANNA ROLL FOR ME...?
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DM's Toolbox

KEEP UP THE PACE
PREVENTING A STALL

by Johnn Four

Chances are you've experienced a stall, either as a DM or player, that turned a fun session into a boring or frustrating experience for everyone at the table. If you can stop a stall from happening before it can begin, then you'll eliminate all sorts of discouragement and confusion from your games. This column presents a number of suggestions and tips to help you do just that. Collectively, these tricks form what we'll call the prevention tool.

The prevention tool is part planning, part maintenance, and part anticipation. It shouldn't take you much time to perform, and it could even shorten your preparation time as you become more adept at analyzing game play and session plans. Read this article every once in a while, and work these ideas into your regular session preparation routine. In addition, the elements of the prevention tool serve as a concise synopsis of much of the advice that has appeared in past articles.

Campaign Newsletter: This tool has many great uses for your campaigns. You can send out an email or printed campaign newsletter between sessions to help keep your players tuned in to their current goals, NPC relationships, important details about past sessions, rules changes, and other campaign elements. If you anticipate problems, such as resuming a troublesome problem-solving encounter next session, then sprinkle your newsletter with hints, clues, and tips.

Campaign Website: Websites often cover the same type of information as a campaign newsletter, and they have the benefit of being available to players at any time. As with a newsletter, providing regular updates can keep the interest level high and make preventing stalls easier.

Interesting Backstory: Try to flesh out the details and events that lead up to the current storyline. A good campaign history can rescue a stalled DM or give PCs some clues or examples by providing more details to work with. Avoid imparting histories in one long monologue; spread the information out among NPC conversations, discovered scrolls and books, skill checks, and newsletter or website blurbs.

Know the Players: What gaming style do your players have? Why do they enjoy roleplaying? Understanding each player's answer will help you create game sessions tailored to your group's tastes.

Know Your NPCs: Understand your major NPCs. Nothing stalls a game faster than a DM looking through her notes to find an NPC's description. Learn the rules before the session for such things as skills, abilities, spells, magic items, and special equipment that the key NPCs possess. Also understand their personalities, motivations, and goals to help you roleplay them more consistently. A strong grasp of your NPCs also helps you improvise and generate interesting storylines.

Know Your Setting: Know more about the geography, locations, politics, and important inhabitants of your game world in the area where the PCs are adventuring. This lets you improvise more confidently, saves you from planning unnecessary details, and provides more resources to help the PCs to get out of a jam.

Create Multiple Solutions: Ensure that there are at least two ways out of every situation, challenge, or puzzle that you throw at the party.

Allow Information Gathering: Before presenting the PCs with a challenge, make sure they have some chances to get the information they need to make fast decisions or intelligent plans. Use information as a reward for good roleplaying or victory in combat.

Create Extra or Duplicate Clues: The PCs will kill, ruin, or miss critical clues that the story hinges upon, so it's a good idea to make some back-ups. Allow the same information to be learned through different means, or spread the information throughout several encounters.

Always Provide Hope: If a foe seems too overwhelming or if the situation feels futile, ensure that the players know there is some solution or salvation that will get them out of their predicament. If the answer lies within their own abilities, actions, or powers, then make sure they know that through NPC dialogue or DM hints. If the PCs are dependent on an external solution, give them the parameters so they know what to wait for. "We're surrounded by the orc army, and their sappers are

working to take down the wall, but we only have to hold out until dawn; the elven bowmen will be here by then."

Create Back-up Encounters: Always try to have a couple of quick, fast-paced encounters tucked away in your notes to throw at the party in case the PCs take an unexpected route, the session energy is low, or you need a delivery mechanism for a clue or plot hook.

Be Generous: An adventure that's too easy is better than one so difficult it's frustrating or confusing. A little combat, some good roleplaying, or an improvisational twist can always spice up a simple adventure, but it's much harder to fix a session that has stalled because it's too complicated or hard.

Avoid Mazes and Complex Mapping: Mazes are easy to run from a DM's perspective, but if players are mapping their progress, a complex map can stall the game almost instantly. You can avoid this by creating a player's map to use as a handout, avoiding large mazes altogether, or using miniatures.

Avoid Class-Specific Challenges: Try not to hinge an entire game session or story around a particular player and her PC. It's fine to spotlight a character for an encounter or two, but make sure everyone gets some screen time and is able to make independent decisions and actions. It's also dangerous to make a story dependent on a specific race or class in case that PC perishes, the player can't attend the session, or the player misses her cue.

Do Not Require Investigative Conversations: If your game session depends on some specific conversations with various NPCs, then you could be headed for a stall. Even if you're absolutely sure the PCs will stop to chat, requiring that specific questions be asked by the PCs is looking for trouble. Including investigative conversations is fine, but don't make the adventure hinge on one conversation.

Plan a Fast Pace, Not a Killer Pace: Try to plan each session so that fast-paced or action-oriented encounters split up sequences of slower encounters. Put a small combat in between a pair of roleplaying encounters, or insert an interesting roleplaying encounter into a long overland journey. Having a couple of floating encounters that can be easily dropped in at any time helps pacing a lot as well.

1 Avoid Railroading

You want to avoid "railroading" the PCs down a linear story track that they have no control over, so it's a good idea to think about your plot before a session. Having a flexible and interesting storyline helps prevent many stalls, as do back-up plans in case things take an unexpected direction. Here's a short list of questions to help you make sure you're not railroading the PCs through a narrow storyline.

1. Are there interesting ways for the party to interact with the plot?
2. Are there interesting or strong plot hooks that give the group clear choices?
3. Do you have a relatively good idea of where the plot is going to go?
4. Do you have a secondary outline or "plan B" in case things fall apart or the PCs go in an unpredictable direction?
5. Can each of the stages or encounters of your story be introduced in more than one way?

2 Know the Characters

Even if you don't have perfect insight into each player, knowing each character's abilities can keep everyone engaged. This might sound overly simple, but people playing D&D have more fun when their characters are doing something. By providing challenges suited to each skill set, you'll keep the whole group's attention. Here's a short list of questions to help you remain focused on this important consideration.

1. Does more than one character have a skill crucial to next game's puzzle or plot?
2. Does a PC have a spell, magic item, or special ability that would allow the party to thwart your plans too easily?
3. Will there be something of interest to each PC next session?
4. Check out their skills so you'll be able to suggest relevant skill checks in case everyone gets stuck.
5. How healthy and fit are they for next session's challenges?

3 Know the Rules

A strong grasp of the rules paves the way for a smooth session and good storytelling. Keep your *Player's Handbook* around to read during breaks. Consider enlisting your players by asking them to research troublesome rules issues. An easy way to do this is to divide the rules up into four categories: combat, skills, spells, and feats. Does your group seem to stop and look up one or more of these categories often during play? Possible solutions include:

1. Assign one category for each player to research.
2. Use Post-It notes to bookmark frequently referenced pages.
3. Create charts, spellbook pages, and rules hints for yourself and the other players.
4. Photocopy indexes of the books and supplements you use, and highlight the topics and pages you access frequently.
5. Create encounters and adventures that focus on specific rules to help everyone learn them, such as a wrestling tournament for the grappling rules.

4 Provide Clue Banks

When the PCs are stumped and have no clues, regardless of how complex or obscure their problem is, provide them with one or more ways to find an answer. You don't have to spell out every answer to each question they have, but at least provide the beginnings of a trail of clues. Don't wait for them to get stuck before introducing alternative information sources, otherwise it might feel contrived or awkward. Here's a short list of different places that could potentially house consistent information sources:

1. Markets
2. Libraries
3. Government agencies
4. Garbage dumps
5. Hamlets and villages
6. Monasteries and churches
7. Bandits
8. Intelligent monsters
9. Guild houses
10. Inns, rest-houses, and way stations

Dungeoncraft

DESIGNING WILDERNESS ADVENTURES
ADVENTURING OFF THE MAP

by Monte Cook

The PCs head into dangerous territory, occupied not by commoners and gentlefolk, but by monsters and creatures the likes of which no one has ever seen. They don't know the way, and their main goals are simply discovery and survival. It sounds like a dungeon quest, but it also can be a wilderness adventure.

It's surprising that it's not a more popular avenue for adventure scenarios—the PCs forge into the wild lands, never before trodden upon by human (or dwarven, elven, gnome, half-orc, or halfling) feet. Exploration is a key element in many campaigns, but the exploration is almost always underground. In truth, the "explore the wilderness" scenario is indeed the above-ground equivalent of the dungeon adventure.

Before you can send your PCs off into the true wilderness, you've got to figure out what "wilderness" is. What's meant here isn't just a lot of trees between towns, or a dangerous mountain pass. "Wilderness" is a forest where no one knows what's on the other side. Mountains where—if there is indeed a navigable pass—no one knows where it is. The PCs don't have maps; they don't have any knowledge at all of what lies even one step ahead.

Such areas might be difficult to come by in some campaign worlds. In many, though, there is always an "edge of the map" where the PCs can venture. Sometimes, such an adventure might involve sailing to an entirely new continent (or in an interesting variant, magical travel to a completely new world or plane). Wilderness, really, is where you make it.

When designing wilderness adventures, use the same sensibilities and techniques you use when designing a dungeon adventure. First of all, like a basic dungeon delve, the PCs are entering a new area, and most likely keeping a map of where they are and where they've been. So both types of adventures, at their core, are "fill in the map" scenarios. The PCs have a blank sheet of paper and the goal is to fill as much of it in as possible through exploration and travel. They may do this simply by charting their path or by methodically exploring each "square" or "hex" of their map and filling it in with notes or symbols for rivers, mountains, forests, villages, and so on.

A fun way to start a wilderness adventure is to give the players a mostly blank map for them to fill out as they go along. It's helpful if the map is sectioned off—like a square or hex grid. This way, the PCs have a constant scale and can fill in the squares or hexes as they go. A good scale for such a map is 3 miles to a hex or square, although sometimes even 1 mile to a hex or square will work.

This relatively small scale is important. While an "on the road" outdoor adventure might span hundreds of miles, much of that can be somewhat glossed over. The DM says "you travel for three days when . . ." and then an encounter happens. When exploring uncharted regions, you're better off with a smaller scale and taking things slower. Of course, the characters simply move a lot slower in a given time period without roads or paths.

Don't be afraid to pace a wilderness adventure more like a dungeon adventure than like traveling. The players should always suspect a new threat or wonderful discovery literally lying behind the next tree or rock.

Just like in a dungeon adventure, as the PCs explore, you want to fill the areas they explore with interesting locations. Obviously, exploration isn't fun unless there are things to find. Rather than traps in a dungeon, however, the wilderness presents hazards and obstacles. Rivers to ford, cliffs to scale, rockslides, forest fires, storms, sinkholes, quicksand, and so on present challenging and interesting encounters for the PCs. Rules for handling these types of challenges can be found in Chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Magic can also play a part in these types of adventures. Rather than the mysterious dungeon device that has strange powers (like a magical fountain or an animated statue), the wilderness can be filled with naturally magical areas. Such mysterious and arcane

locales can include deposits of magical minerals that heal wounds or reverse gravity, cursed glens befouled by the presence of a demon, magic-dead areas, magic-rich areas, gateways to other planes, and so on.

Creatures of the Unknown

Perhaps most interesting of all, just like in a dungeon, challenging monsters can threaten the exploring PCs. For the DM, this is an interesting and exciting proposition. Now is the time to break out that new monster book and introduce dangerous beasts that the characters have never seen before.

Alternatively, you can take familiar monsters and change them. Displacer beasts might live in the uncharted land, but they are extremely intelligent and some of them are good in alignment.

One Man's Wilderness is Another Man's Home

Just because its wilderness in the characters' eyes does not mean no intelligent beings live there. While a true wilderness adventure usually does not include any type of civilization, the PCs might encounter previously unknown races of creatures. These new people might have villages or communities of their own, but if they are sophisticated and numerous enough to have actual cities, there needs to be a good reason why the races of the "civilized" areas from where the PCs hail have never heard of them.

While you could insert humans, elves or other standard races that are simply separate from the people of the PCs' homeland, it's often most fun to introduce entirely new races in unexplored areas. Of course, it isn't just appearance or strange powers that make a race interesting and exotic. Strange customs, outlooks, or religions can not only convey a feeling of weirdness, but it can make the race seem more real, as well. Players that give their situation any thought will realize that people who have never seen humans before are likely to be very different from humans in how they think, what they value, and how they go about their lives.

Here's a short list of some possible cultural "hooks":

- The new people fear metal as the work of demons due to some event in their distant past.
- The new people sacrifice the best and brightest of their children to their goddess, to serve her in the heavens (not necessarily as an evil act).
- The new people value works of art and creativity above all else.
- The new people do not eat meat and in fact have never even considered it.
- The new people see no crime in stealing—they believe that if you can take it, it's yours.
- The new people have no skill or experience with magic whatsoever.
- The new people are extremely skilled with magic (naturally, like a sorcerer) and can't comprehend the concept of a non-spellcaster.
- The new people find speech to be distasteful and speak only when absolutely necessary.

While normally the PCs might just fight or avoid the dangerous intelligent inhabitants of the new region, smart characters will figure out that the natives of the land have a lot of information concerning the geography, dangers, and secrets of this "wilderness." They might find that they need to befriend or at least make peace with the natives. Smart PCs will want to trade with the new people to get information or even much-needed supplies, but this requires them to figure out what the natives value (and a way to communicate with them in the first place).

As with any kind of adventure, one of the best things a DM can do is to evoke an appropriate mood. When the PCs are exploring a new land, that mood should perhaps be "strangers in a strange land." The characters are the alien invaders. The creatures they meet should not only be strange to them, but the PCs should be strange to the natives as well. The natives are likely to find the PCs' appearance and behavior strange. Xenophobic or simply untrusting beings react to the strangeness with fear, but others might see the explorers as a curiosity, or even a wonder. They could see them as gods, demons, an omen, a curse, potential saviors, enemies, slaves, or sacrifices. On the other hand, they might not care about the characters' arrival at all. How they react to the PCs helps define the culture and tells the players something about the people in general.

WILDERNESS ENCOUNTERS

Although a group of hunting owlbears makes a fine encounter in the wilderness, don't neglect to create "set-piece" encounters or sites for the PCs to come upon. Remember that just because it's wilderness to the PCs doesn't mean that there are no permanent locations of importance to other creatures. For example:

The PCs come into a quiet glen with a still pool of water in its center. No animals are about, and no wind blows. The pool is inherently magical, filled with natural power that restores anyone drinking even a small amount to full hit point and ability score totals (if they are damaged). However, the custodians of the pool are three nymphs who have never seen creatures like the PCs before. They fear the characters and the idea that they might taint the delicate enchantment of the water, and so they try to drive them out of the glen.

Nearby, a group of trolls dwell in a cave. They want the magical pool for themselves. The nymphs have successfully defended themselves and the site from the monsters, but the trolls won't hesitate to exploit the arrival of the PCs as a way to get the upper hand, either as a distraction or as inadvertent aid in weakening the nymphs. Of course, if the PCs dealt with the trolls, it might help earn the trust of the nymphs, but how do the PCs find that out?

Establishing a Base

An interesting aspect of exploring the wilderness is the fact that the PCs won't have a friendly town with a comfortable inn to retreat back to after each adventure. Instead, they'll have to create a base of operations for themselves. This might be a simple cave they find that serves as little more than shelter from the elements, or they might build a wooden fort if they're ambitious. Perhaps they defeat a creature and adopt its lair as their base. Whatever form it takes, it becomes a place for the PCs to rest and recuperate, store supplies and treasure, and perhaps a defensive spot. If the PCs are exploring this new land with the idea that one day colonists will follow behind them, the base might become a village and eventually a city, with the PCs as the founders and their deeds legends.

The main concern in establishing a base is security. It's a place that the PCs can use to defend themselves and their belongings. Don't discourage their efforts of creating a home by having it constantly attacked or destroyed. It's not necessary to leave it utterly sacrosanct, but remember that it's a fun part of frontier-style explorations. A permanent base or camp represents, at least on some level, a taming of the wilderness and brings some level of civilization. However, it's easy for the players to see it only as a liability if monsters constantly attack.

Some players might even want to establish multiple camps or bases, each one deeper into the wilderness than the last. It would become a very interesting campaign if, after they formed the first base, they are able to gather some followers (perhaps by going back to civilization or sending word) to man the fortified camp while they were gone. Their series of forts would then mark their passage through the new land, and each would become locations in which the PCs were very invested and involved. Just some of the various dramas and events that might take place in their wilderness camps might include:

- A plague strikes many of the followers stationed at a camp, and they need a cure.
- Two important NPCs at a camp begin to feud, and it threatens to divide all of the followers stationed there.
- A spy sent by some enemy of the PCs from the civilized lands has infiltrated the camp and wishes to destroy it and the PCs.
- A group of monsters repeatedly attacks the camp.
- The PCs return to the camp after an exploratory mission to find all of the followers missing. They must discover what happened to all of them and get them back.

WILDERNESS CONSIDERATIONS

When the PCs head deep into the wilderness, keep in mind that they will almost certainly not be able to bring enough food with them. They'll have to hunt, forage, or produce food magically. They won't have access to friendly temples willing to heal or raise them. If the PCs are cursed, blinded, or ability drained, they'll have to remedy the ill themselves or cope with the debilitation. There are no shops to sell more arrows, better armor, or magic potions. Likewise, there are no taverns to be used as places to gather information (and unless the adventure involves encounters with new intelligent races, characters with a lot of social skills might feel a bit cheated).

Too Much Freedom?

Some players love freedom. They don't want to be led through yet another adventure by the nose, and they get frustrated in dungeons where the only choices are the door on the left and the door on the right. These players will love investigating new wilderness areas filled with interesting things to discover and interact with.

Some players, however, are paralyzed by such freedom. When the DM asks them what they want to do, confronted with so many choices, they stare back blankly. In a wilderness adventure, these players are going to need some direction and motivation. You can provide this in a few different ways.

The first, and easiest, is to give the characters a specific goal. They must go into the wilderness to find an escaped convict, a cure for a plague, or the legendary mountain where the gods first lived. The adventure then becomes less exploratory and more search-oriented. These are similar but not exactly the same. PCs with a goal other than simple exploration aren't going to linger even when they come upon something interesting that has no bearing on their quest. They are going to look for leads toward the fulfillment of their mission and are not likely to look favorably upon a methodical search of a whole new land. They're going to want clues and evidence that they are on the right track. The DM needs to design his wilderness adventure with these things in mind.

A different approach involves a much more open-ended goal. For example, a group of gnolls suddenly emerges from the wilderness to attack the civilized lands. They are driven back but could still be a threat. Local rulers put a bounty on the heads of all the gnolls found in the wilderness. Now the PCs thrust themselves into the unknown lands with a mission, but one that involves a lot of simple, straightforward exploration and does not necessarily have a crushing deadline. The characters become explorers, as described earlier, but—when in doubt—always have some driving motivation when they wonder what to do next.

Discovering the undiscovered is an important aspect of the game. There is no greater way to do this, no more archetypal fantasy adventure, than for brave heroes to blaze a trail into the heart of mysterious and uncharted lands. D

Sage Advice

TOUGH QUESTIONS OFFICIAL ANSWERS

by Skip Williams

This month, the Sage considers questions regarding monsters and equipment. You can email the Sage with your questions at sageadvice@paizo.com.

The description for the *antimagic field* spell says that it negates supernatural abilities but not extraordinary abilities. The description for the damage reduction special quality in the *Monster Manual* glossary says damage reduction can be either supernatural or extraordinary, but it doesn't say which monsters have which kind. Suppose my fighter/wizard casts *antimagic field* on herself and attacks a pit fiend. The pit fiend has damage reduction 15/good and silver. The *antimagic field* would negate the weapon's "good" quality, right? Does the pit fiend lose its damage reduction special quality completely? Or is silver extraordinary and good supernatural? What about the damage reduction of golems, dragons, werewolves, and other creatures?

Damage reduction is extraordinary unless the weapon property that bypasses the damage reduction is "magic" (as in damage reduction #/magic) or one of the four alignment qualities (chaotic, evil, good, or lawful), in which case it is supernatural. Damage reduction that is bypassed by any other weapon quality that a manufactured weapon could not have without being magical also would be a supernatural special quality.

When a creature's damage reduction entry has two or more elements, some extraordinary and some supernatural, only the supernatural elements go away inside an *antimagic field*.

If a creature's damage reduction entry has multiple parts separated by the word "and," a weapon must have all those qualities to bypass the damage reduction. A creature such as a pit fiend, whose damage reduction is 15/good and silver, has damage reduction that's difficult to bypass because the weapon must be both good and silver to overcome its damage reduction. Attacks from a creature with the good subtype would bypass a pit fiend's damage reduction if the creature wielded a silver weapon. As a natural ability, such a creature's attacks with natural or manufactured weaponry bypass damage reduction as good weapons. Otherwise, a sliver weapon must also be magical and have the good quality to bypass the damage reduction. Inside an *antimagic field* however, only the "sliver" portion of the pit fiend damage reduction functions, so the pit fiend effectively has damage reduction 15/silver. Anyone wielding a silver weapon can bypass the pit fiend's damage reduction inside an *antimagic field*.

If the damage reduction entry has two or more elements separated by the word "or," then an attack need only one of those qualities to bypass the damage reduction. For example, a bearded devil's damage reduction entry reads 5/silver or good, so any silver weapon or any good weapon can bypass the damage reduction. Inside an *antimagic field*, the "good" element in the damage reduction would still be suppressed, and a silver weapon still would bypass the damage reduction.

The description for gaze attacks in the *Monster Manual* says any opponents within range of the gaze need to make saving throws. The *Dungeon Master's Guide* says any characters within range must save. Which is correct? If a creature with a gaze attack has allies, do the allies have to make saves against the gaze attack? Is it possible for a creature to suppress its own gaze attack? If so, how?

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* is correct. Anyone, ally or enemy, who looks into the eyes of a creature with a gaze attack has to save against the attack. Allies, however, can avert their eyes from the creature with the gaze attack and avoid having to make saving throws 50% of the time; this doesn't provide complete protection, but it helps. The creature with the gaze attack gains concealment relative to its allies that are averting their eyes, but since those allies probably aren't going to attack the creature, that's not a big concern.

Borders illustrated by David Wahlstrom

Since it's looking into the eyes that triggers a save against a gaze attack, the creature with the attack can stop using its gaze simply by closing its eyes; this is not an action, and the creature can do so anytime, even when flat-footed or during another creature's turn. The creature is blinded so long as it keeps its eyes shut. The creature also can veil its eyes with a translucent cloth. This stops the gaze attack, but all other creatures have partial concealment (20% miss chance) relative to it.

I was wondering about ghosts making physical attacks. The text on the incorporeal subtype in the *Monster Manual* glossary says that these creatures lack a Strength score. The ghost template has the incorporeal subtype and the example ghost has a Strength score. The template makes no exception for ghosts having a Strength score. Do ghosts have a Strength score just when manifesting? Can ghosts power attack? How do ghosts attacking with ghost touch weapons work as far as damage modifiers from Strength? When using a ghost touch weapon, does a ghost still make an incorporeal touch attack? If a ghost lacks a Strength score, how can they physically move things in the Material Plane or Ethereal Planes? Does a ghost's Dexterity only modify incorporeal touch attacks?

Ghosts have Strength scores in spite of having the incorporeal subtype. A ghost on the Ethereal Plane is not incorporeal.

A manifested ghost functions on the Material Plane exactly like an incorporeal creature does. A manifested ghost can't exert any Strength on the Material Plane and cannot manipulate any objects unless it has the telekinesis power or the malevolence power and successfully uses it to take over a corporeal body (in which case it has whatever Strength score the body has). A ghost touch weapon also allows a ghost to exert Strength on the Material Plane.

A manifested ghost using a ghost touch weapon against a foe on the Material Plane makes a normal attack against the target's normal Armor Class (not an incorporeal touch attack). If the attack is a melee attack, the ghost's Strength modifier (not its Dexterity modifier) applies to the attack. A ghost with the Weapon Finesse feat can use its Dexterity modifier for a melee attack with a ghost touch weapon. If the ghost has the Power Attack feat, it can use that feat with a ghost touch weapon.

A ghost on the Ethereal Plane uses its Strength score as normal.

Just how and when can you use armor spikes? If you're using two weapons already, can you use armor spikes to make a second off-hand attack? What if you're using a weapon and a shield? Can you use the armor spikes for an off-hand attack and still get a shield bonus to Armor Class from the shield? What if you use a two-handed weapon? Can you wield the weapon in two hands and still make an off-hand attack with the spikes? What are your options for using armor spikes in a grapple? Can you use them when pinned? If you've got another light weapon, can you use that and your armor spikes when grappling?

When you fight with more than one weapon, you gain an extra attack (Improved Two-Weapon Fighting and greater Two-Weapon Fighting give you more attacks with the extra weapon). Armor spikes are a light weapon that can be used as the extra weapon.

> You can use a fly speed only when carrying a light load. If your load is medium or heavy, you cannot fly.

If you attack only with your armor spikes during your turn (or use the armor spikes to make an attack of opportunity) you use them just like a regular weapon. If you use the full attack action, you can use armor spikes as either a primary light weapon or as an off-hand light weapon, even if you're using a shield or using a two-handed weapon. In these latter two cases, you're assumed to be kicking or kneeing your foe with your armor spikes.

Whenever you use armor spikes as an off-hand weapon, you suffer all the penalties for attacking with two weapons (see Table 8–10 in the *Player's Handbook*). When using armor spikes along with a two-handed weapon, it's usually best to use the two-handed weapon as your primary attack and the armor spikes as the off-hand weapon. You can use the armor spikes as the primary weapon and the two-handed weapon as the off-hand attack, but when you do so, you don't get the benefit of using a light weapon in your off hand.

You cannot, however, use your armor spikes to make a second off-hand attack when you're already fighting with two weapons. If you have a weapon in both hands and armor spikes, you can attack with the weapons in your hands (and not with the armor spikes) or with one of the weapons in your hands and the armor spikes (see the description of spiked armor in Chapter 7 of the *Player's Handbook*).

When grappling, you can damage your foe with your spikes by making a regular grapple check (opposed by your foe's check). If you succeed, you deal piercing damage to your foe (see Table 7–5 in the *Player's Handbook*) rather than the unarmed strike damage you'd normally deal when damaging your foe with a grapple check. Since you can use armor spikes as a light weapon, you can simply use them to attack your

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foe. You suffer a -4 penalty on your attack roll when attacking with a light weapon in a grapple (see page 156 in the *Player's Handbook*), but if your foe is bigger or stronger than you, this might prove a better tactic than trying to deal damage through a grapple check, because there is no opposed roll to make—you just have to hit your opponent's Armor Class. You can't attack with two weapons when grappling, even when one of those weapons is armor spikes (see the section on grappling in Chapter 8 of the *Player's Handbook*).

You can't attack and damage your foe if he has you pinned. If you manage to break the pin and avoid being pinned again, you can go back to attacking your foe. If your attack bonus is high enough to allow multiple attacks, you might manage to break the pin and then use your remaining attack to damage your foe. To accomplish this you must first use an attack to break the pin. You can break a pin using the Escape Artist skill, but trying to do so is a standard action for you; once you use the standard action to attempt escape, you can't make any more attacks during your turn.

The entry on flight in the *Monster Manual* doesn't elaborate on whether carrying a medium or heavy load actually prevents flight, or it simply slows the flyer down below the indicated speed (and in the latter case, it doesn't explain how much the creature is slowed down). Some of the monster entries do make mention of medium and heavy loads in terms of carrying capacity (griffins and spider-eaters for example). Does that mean those creatures can fly with medium or heavy loads? Is it even possible for a flying creature to get airborne at less that its listed fly speed?

You can use a fly speed only when carrying a light load or less. If your load is medium or heavy, you cannot fly; certain kinds of magical flight, such as a *fly* spell, don't have this restriction. Check the description of the flying effect to be sure.

A griffin or a spider-eater can carry a medium or heavy load, but cannot fly when doing so.

Most flying creatures can get aloft at less than their full fly speeds, provided that they can maintain their minimum forward speeds (see Tactical Aerial Movement in Chapter 2 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). It's also possible to fly when wearing medium or heavy armor if the weight of the armor (plus everything else you carry) doesn't exceed your light load rating. The armor still slows you down (page 20 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* has an expanded table of reduced speeds). For example a balor is a Large creature with a Strength score of 35. A light load for a balor is 2,128 pounds. To calculate that, we must use the tremendous Strength rule on page 163 of the *Player's Handbook* and find the light load rating for Strength 25 (the number between 20 and 29 that has the same 1's digit as 35). This gives us a value of 266 pounds. Since the balor's Strength is 35, we multiply 266 by 4, which gives us 1,064 pounds. The balor is a Large biped, however, so its carrying capacity doubles (1,064x2=2,128). A balor can fly so long as it carries less than 2,128 pounds. A breastplate for a Large biped weighs 60 pounds (from Table 7–6 in the *Player's*

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Handbook), so its weight won't keep a balor from getting aloft when wearing it. Since a breastplate is medium armor, the balor's base fly speed of 90 feet is slowed to 60 feet (from the table on page 20 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Since the balor has good maneuverability, it has no minimum forward speed and can easily fly wearing the breastplate. Even if the balor had poor maneuverability its minimum forward speed would be 45 feet (half its base speed of 90 feet), and it still could fly at a speed of 60 when wearing the breastplate.

If a creature's base flying speed is greater than listed on the chart on page 20 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, just divide the creature's base flying speed into equal parts dividable by 10 and then add up the reduced values for those base speeds off the chart. For example, if a flying creature with a fly speed of 150 feet wears medium armor and can still get aloft, it can fly at a speed of 105 feet (its minimum forward speed, if it had one, would be half the base flying speed, or 75 feet). The reduced speed of 105 feet was calculated by splitting the fly speed into 70 feet and 80 feet (70 + 80 = 150). At reduced speed, 70 feet becomes 50 feet and 80 feet becomes 55 feet (50 + 55 = 105).

Ghosts have Strength scores in spite of having the incorporeal subtype.

Note that there are some creatures in the game that cannot fly when wearing medium or heavy armor, no matter what their load happens to be (for example, the avariel from *Races of Faerun*), so be sure to check the creature's description for any special limits on it's flying ability.

Suppose you have a flying mount, say a griffon. What do you have to do to use the ride-by tactic in the air or in swooping down on a target? Do you need to take the Flyby Attack feat? Or does the Ride-By Attack feat cover flying mounts as well? In order for the mount to make a single attack when riding or flying by, does it also need to somehow gain a feat? If so, which one?

If the example rider wants to make attacks while flying by foes, she needs the Ride-By Attack feat and needs to charge (and fly) in a straight line (see the next question). For the mount to attack in the same situation, it would need the Flyby Attack feat. The rider's Ride-By Attack feat won't help the mount attack, nor will the mount's Flyby Attack feat help the rider attack.

Note that you have to have a fly speed to take the Flyby Attack feat. If you merely ride a flying mount, you don't meet the prerequisite for the feat. If you can meet the prerequisite, your flying mount still doesn't benefit from your Flyby Attack feat (although it's possible that a feat or class feature might allow you to share the feat).

With the rules erratum that prohibits overruns as part of a charge, the Ride-By Attack feat is now nearly useless. You must use the charge action to use the Ride-By Attack feat, and that requires you to travel in a straight line toward your target. Using the example in the *Players Handbook*, this would appear to rather specifically mean along a line from your entire square (or squares if riding a horse or other mount with a space of 10 feet or greater), to the target square. Ride-By Attack allows you to continue moving along the straight line of the charge after your attack. This would have to mean that at some point you would enter the square (or squares) of the creature you attacked. (At least I cannot conceive of any other way it could be done). Since you cannot enter your foe's space unless the creature is already dead, Ride-By Attack is now pretty much useless if you can't also overrun the foe. Some have suggested that you could charge in a manner that would not bring you through the target creature's square (or squares). To do so, you would not be charging directly toward the target and likely not moving by the shortest route (also a charge requirement) or attacking it from the first possible square (another charge requirement). In any of these cases, you would be breaking the rules for a charge. Am I wrong about any of this?

No, you've got it about right.

When using the Ride-By attack feat, you must conduct your charge so that you move in a straight line toward the closest square from which it is possible to attack your chosen foe, so long as it is a square that allows you to attack and then continue on in the straight line of the charge. You still must attack your foe the moment you reach that square (although the feat description doesn't say so, you and your mount also must move at least 5 feet after you make your attack to get the benefit of the feat). This is a special rule for charging when using the Ride-By Attack feat. Note that the Flyby Attack feat (discussed in the previous question) does not require you to move in a straight line, you merely make a single move and take another standard action at some point during that move.